

A REVIEW OF  
EDWARDS'S  
“INQUIRY INTO THE  
FREEDOM OF THE  
WILL.”

CONTAINING

1. STATEMENT OF  
EDWARDS'S SYSTEM.
2. THE LEGITIMATE  
CONSEQUENCES OF  
THIS SYSTEM.
3. AN EXAMINATION  
OF THE ARGUMENTS  
AGAINST A SELF-  
DETERMINING WILL.

BY HENRY PHILIP  
TAPPAN.

I am afraid that Edwards's book (however well meant,) has done much harm in England, as it has secured a favourable hearing to the same doctrines, which, since the time of Clarke, had been generally ranked among the most dangerous errors of Hobbes and his disciples." — *Dugald Stewart.*

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## INTRODUCTION”

DISCUSSIONS respecting the will, have, unhappily, been confounded with theological opinions, and hence have led to theological controversies, where predilections for a particular school or sect, have generally prejudged the conclusions of philosophy. As a part of the mental constitution, the will must be subjected to the legitimate methods of psychological investigation, and must abide the result. If we enter the field of



affords the highest reason why we should press it to the utmost limit of consciousness. Nothing surely can serve more to fix our impressions of moral obligation, or to open our eye to the imperishable truth and excellency of religion, than a clear and ripe knowledge of that, which makes us the subjects of duty. As a believer in philosophy, I claim unbounded liberty of thought, and by thinking I hope to arrive at truth. As a believer in the Bible I always anticipate that the truths to which philosophy







suppose, on the other hand, that with every advance of philosophy the facts of the Bible are borne aloft, and their divine authority and their truth made more manifest, have we not reason to bless the researches which have enabled us to perceive more clearly the light from Heaven? A system of truth does not fear, it courts philosophical scrutiny. Its excellency will be most resplendent when it has had the most fiery trial of thought. Nothing would so weaken my faith in the Bible as the fact of being

compelled to tremble for its safety whenever I claimed and exercised the prerogative of reason. And what I say of it as a whole, I say of doctrines claiming to be derived from it.

Theologians are liable to impose upon themselves when they argue from the truths of the Bible to the truths of their philosophy; either under the view that the last are deducible from the former, or that they serve to account for and confirm the former. How often is their philosophy drawn from some other source, or handed down by







steady course resistlessly, settling her own bounds and methods, and selecting her own fields, and giving to the world her own discoveries. And is the truth of the Bible unsettled? No. The memory of Galileo and of Cuvier is blessed by the same lips which name the name of Christ.

Now we ask the same independence of research in the philosophy of the human mind, and no less with respect to the Will than with respect to any other faculty. We wish to make this purely a













prejudices, and from the wish to avoid all unnecessary strangeness of manner in handling an old subject, and more than all, to meet what are regarded by many as the weightiest and most conclusive reasonings on this subject, that I open this discussion with a review of “Edwards’s Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will.” There is no work of higher authority among those who deny the self-determining power of the will; and none which on this subject has called forth more general admiration for acuteness of thought

and logical subtlety. I believe there is a prevailing impression that Edwards must be fairly met in order to make any advance in an opposite argument. I propose no less than this attempt, presumptuous though it may seem, yet honest and made for truth's sake. Truth is greater and more venerable than the names of great and venerable men, or of great and venerable sects: and I cannot believe that I seek truth with a proper love and veneration, unless I seek her, confiding in herself alone, neither











But although I intend to conduct my argument rigidly on psychological principles, I shall endeavour in the end to show that moral responsibility is really sustained by this exposition of the will; and that I have not, to say the least, weakened one of the supports of evangelical religion, nor shorn it of one of its glories.

The plan of my undertaking embraces the following particulars:

1. A statement of Edwards's system.

2. The legitimate consequences of this system.

3. An examination of the arguments against a self-determining will.

4. The doctrine of the will determined by an appeal to consciousness.

5. This doctrine viewed in connexion with moral agency and responsibility.

6. This doctrine viewed in connexion with the truths and precepts of the Bible.

The first three complete the review of Edwards, and make up the present volume. Another volume is



# 1: A STATEMENT OF EDWARDS'S SYSTEM.

EDWARDS'S System, or, in other words, his Philosophy of the Will, is contained in part I. of his "Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will." This part comprises five sections, which I shall give with their titles in his own order. My object is to arrive at truth. I shall therefore use my best endeavours to make this statement with the utmost clearness and fairness. In this part of my work, my chief anxiety is to have

Edwards perfectly understood. My quotations are made from the edition published by S. Converse, New-York, 1829.

## “Sec. 1: Concerning the Nature of the Will.”

Edwards under this title gives his definition of the will. “*The will is, that by which the mind chooses anything.*” The faculty of the ***will***, is that power, or principle of mind, by which it is capable of choosing: an act of the ***will*** is the same as an act of ***choosing*** or

***choice***” (p. 15.)

He then identifies “choosing” and “refusing:” “In every act of refusal the mind chooses the absence of the thing refused.” (p. 16.)

The will is thus ***the faculty of choice***. Choice manifests itself either in relation to one object or several objects. Where there is but one object, its possession or non-possession — its enjoyment or non-enjoyment — its presence or absence, is chosen. Where there are several objects, and they are so incompatible that

the possession, enjoyment, or presence of one, involves the refusal of the others, then choice manifests itself in fixing upon the particular object to be retained, and the objects to be set aside.

This definition is given on the ground that any object being regarded as positive, may be contrasted with its negative: and that therefore the refusing a negative is equivalent to choosing a positive; and the choosing a negative, equivalent to refusing a positive, and vice versa. Thus if the presence of an



object be taken as positive, its absence is negative. To refuse the presence is therefore to choose the absence; and to choose the presence, to refuse the absence: so that every act of choosing involves refusing, and every act of refusing involves choosing; in other words, they are equivalents.

### *Object of Will.*

The object in respect to which the energy of choice is manifested, inducing external action, or the action of any other faculty

of the mind, is always an *immediate object*. Although other objects may appear desirable, that alone is the object of choice which is the occasion of present action — that alone is chosen as the subject of thought on which I actually think — that alone is chosen as the object of muscular exertion respecting which muscular exertion is made. That is, every act of choice manifests itself by producing some change or effect in some other part of our being. “The thing next chosen or preferred, when

a man wills to walk, is not his being removed to such a place where he would be, but such an exertion and motion of his legs and feet, &c. in order to it.” The same principle applies to any mental exertion.

### *Will and Desire.*

Edwards never opposes will and desire. The only distinction that can possibly be made is that of genus and species. They are the same in *kind*. “I do not suppose that *will* and *desire* are words of precisely the same

signification: *will* seems to be a word of a more general signification, extending to things present and absent. *Desire* respects something absent. But yet I cannot think they are so entirely distinct that they can ever be properly said to run counter. A man never, in any instance, wills anything contrary to his desires, or desires anything contrary to his will. The thing which he wills, the very same he desires; and he does not will a thing and desire the *contrary* in any particular.” (p. 17.) The immediate object of will, —



enjoy: that which we hate, we desire to be absent, or to be affected in some way. The loving an object, and the desiring its enjoyment, are identical: the hating it, and desiring its absence or destruction, or any similar affection of it, are likewise identical. The will, therefore, is not to be distinguished, at least in *kind*, from the emotions and passions: this will appear abundantly as we proceed. In other works he expressly identifies them: "I humbly conceive, that the affections of the soul are not properly

distinguishable from the will; as though they were two faculties of soul.” (Revival of Religion in New England, part I.)

“God has endued the soul with two faculties: one is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns, and views, and judges of things; which is called the understanding. The other faculty is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is in some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers; either is inclined

*to them*, or is disinclined or averse *from them*. This faculty is called by various names: it is sometimes called *inclination*; and as it has respect to the actions that are determined or governed by it, is called will. The *will* and the *affections* of the soul are not two faculties: the affections are not essentially distinct from the will, nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will and inclination of the soul, but only in the liveliness and sensibleness of exercise.” (The Nature of the Affections, part I.) That



Edwards makes but two faculties of the mind, the understanding and the will, as well as identifies the will and the passions, is fully settled by the above quotation.

## **“Sec. 2: Concerning the Determination of Will.”**

### ***Meaning of the term.***

“By ***determining*** the will, if the phrase be used with any meaning, must be intended, ***causing*** that the act of the will or choice should be thus and not





conceived of, without also conceiving of something chosen, and where something is chosen, the direction of the choice is determined, that is, the will is determined. And where there are several causes acting upon the will, there is here likewise a composition of the mental forces, and the choice or the determination of the will takes place accordingly. (See p. 23.) Choice or volition then being an effect must have a cause. What is this cause ?

***Motive.***

The cause of volition or choice is called ***motive***. A cause setting a body in motion is properly called the motive of the body; hence, analogously, a cause exciting the will to choice is called the motive of the will. By long usage the proper sense of motive is laid aside, and it has come now to express only the cause or reason of volition. “By ***motive*** I mean the whole of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition, whether that be one thing singly, or many things conjointly. And

when I speak of the ***strongest motive***, I have respect to the strength of the whole that operates to induce a particular act of volition, whether that be the strength of one thing alone, or of many together." And "***that motive which, as it stands in view of the mind, is the strongest, determines the will***" (p. 19.) This is general, and means nothing more than—1. the cause of volition is called motive ; 2. that where there are several causes or motives of volition, the strongest

cause prevails;

3. the cause is often complex ; 4. in estimating the strength of the cause, if it be complex, all the particulars must be considered in their co-operation; and, 5. the strength of the motive “stands in view of the mind,” that is, it is something which the mind knows or is sensible of.

### ***What constitutes the strength of Motive ?***

“Everything that is properly called a motive, excitement, or inducement,

to a perceiving, willing agent, has some sort and degree of *tendency* or *advantage* to move or excite the will, previous to the effect, or to the act of will excited. This previous tendency of the motive is what I call the *strength* of the motive.” When different objects are presented to the mind, they awaken certain emotions, and appear more or less “inviting.” (p. 20.) In the impression thus at once produced, we perceive their “tendency or advantage to move or excite the will.” It is a preference or choice



anticipated, an instantaneous perception of a quality in the object which we feel would determine our choice, if we were called upon to make a choice. The object is felt to be adapted to the state of the mind, and the state of the mind to the object. They are felt to be reciprocal.

*What is this quality which makes up the previous tendency ?*

“Whatever is perceived or apprehended by an intelligent and voluntary



that the “*will is always as the greatest apparent good is.*” (p. 20.)

*The sense in which the term “GOOD” is used.*

“I use the term '*good*' as of the same import with '*agreeable*.' To appear *good* to the mind, as I use the phrase, is the same as to *appear agreeable*, or *seem pleasing* to the mind. If it tends to draw the inclination and move the will, it must be under the notion of that which *suits* the mind. And

therefore that must have the greatest tendency to attract and engage it, which, as it stands in the mind's view, suits it best, and pleases it most; and in that sense is the greatest apparent good. The word ***good*** in this sense includes the avoiding of evil, or of that which is disagreeable and uneasy." (p. 20.)

It follows then that the will is always determined by that which ***seems most pleasing*** or ***appears most agreeable*** to the mind.

This conclusion is in perfect accordance with the

position with which Edwards set out: that will is always as the preponderating desire; indeed, that the will is the same in kind with desire, or with the affections ; and an act of will or choice, nothing more than the strongest desire in reference to an immediate object, and a desire producing an effect in our mental or physical being. The determination of will is the strongest excitement of passion. That which determines will is the cause of passion. The strength of the cause lies in its

perceived tendency to excite the passions and afford enjoyment. As possessing this tendency, it is called *good*, or *pleasing*, or *agreeable*; that is, suiting the state of the mind or the condition of the affections.

The “*good*” which forms the characteristic of a cause or motive is an immediate good, or a good “in the present view of the mind.” (p. 21.) Thus a drunkard, before he drinks, may be supposed to weigh against each other the present pleasure of drinking and the remote painful







the immediate relation, the greatest apparent good. The man thus never chooses what is disagreeable, but always what is agreeable to him.

*Proper use of the term MOST AGREEABLE, in relation to the Will.*

“I have chosen rather to express myself thus, ***that the will always is as the greatest apparent good, or as what appears most agreeable,*** than to say the will is ***determined by*** the greatest apparent good, or by what seems

most agreeable ; because an appearing most agreeable to the mind, and the mind's preferring, seem scarcely distinct. If strict propriety of speech be insisted on, it may more properly be said, that the *voluntary action*, which is the immediate *consequence* of the mind's choice, is determined by that which appears most agreeable, than the choice itself." (p. 21, 22.) Here *the perception or sense of the most agreeable* is identified in express terms with *volition* or *choice*.

“The will is as the most agreeable,”— that is, *the determination of will*, which means *its actual choice*, as a fact of the consciousness is embraced in the *sense of the most agreeable* ; and as the *voluntary action*, or the action, or change, or effect, following volition, in any part of our being,— as to walk, or talk, or read, or think, — has its cause in the volition, or the “mind’s choice,”— so it is entirely proper to say, either that this voluntary action is determined by the volition or that it is determined by

the sense of the most agreeable. Edwards's meaning plainly is, that the terms are convertible: volition may be called the cause of voluntary action, or the sense of the most agreeable may be called the cause. This is still a carrying out of the position, that *the will is as the desire*. "The greatest apparent good" being identical with "the most agreeable," and this again being identical with *the most desirable*, it must follow, that whenever, in relation to any object, the mind is

affected with *the sense of the most agreeable*, it presents the phenomenon of “volition” or “choice;” and still farther, that which is chosen is the most agreeable object, and is known to be such by the simple fact that it is chosen; for its being chosen, means nothing more than that it affects the mind with the sense of the most agreeable, — and the most agreeable is that which is chosen, and cannot be otherwise than chosen; for its being most agreeable, means nothing more than that it is the

object of the mind's choice or sense of the most agreeable. The object, and the mind regarded as a sensitive or willing power, are correlatives, and choice is the union of both: so that if we regard choice as characterizing the object, then the object is affirmed to be the most agreeable; and if, on the other side, we regard choice as characterizing the mind, then the mind is affirmed to be affected with the sense of the most agreeable.

*Cause of Choice, or of*

*the sense of the most agreeable.*

“Volition itself is always determined by that in or about the mind’s view of the object, which causes it to appear most agreeable. I say *in or about the mind’s view of the object*; because what has influence to render an object in view agreeable, is not only what appears *in* the object viewed, but also the *manner* of the view, and the *state and circumstances* of the mind that views.” (p. 22.)

Choice being the union of the mind's sensitivity and the object, — that is, being an affection of the sensitivity, by reason of its perfect agreement and correlation with the object, and of course of the perfect agreement and correlation of the object with the sensitivity, — in determining the cause of choice, we must necessarily look both to the mind and the object. Edwards accordingly gives several particulars in relation to each.

I. In relation to the object, the sense of the



most agreeable, or choice, will depend upon, —

1. The beauty of the object, “viewing it as it is *in itself*” independently of circumstances.

2. “The apparent degree of pleasure or trouble *attending* the object, or *the consequence* of it,” or the object taken with its “concomitants” and consequences.

3. “The *apparent state* of the pleasure or trouble that appears with respect to *distance of time*. It is a thing in itself agreeable to the mind, to have pleasure speedily; and disagreeable





objects generally, whether connected with present or future pleasure, the sense of agreeableness will depend also upon “the ***state of the mind*** which views a proposed object of choice.” (p. 24.) Here we have to consider “the particular temper which the mind has by nature, or that has been introduced or established by education, example, custom, or some other means; or the frame or state that the mind is in on a particular occasion.” (ibid.)

Edwards here suggests, that it may be unnecessary

to consider the *state of the mind* as a ground of agreeableness distinct from the two already mentioned: viz. — the *nature and circumstances of the object*, and the *manner of the view*. “Perhaps, if we strictly consider the matter,” he remarks, “the different temper and state of the mind makes no alteration as to the agreeableness of objects in any other way, than as it makes the objects themselves appear differently, *beautiful* or *deformed*, having apparent pleasure or pain

attending them; and as it occasions the *manner* of the view to be different, causes the idea of beauty or deformity, pleasure or uneasiness, to be more or less lively.” (ibid.) In this remark, Edwards shows plainly how completely he makes mind and object to run together in choice, or how perfect a union of the two, choice is. The *state of the mind* is manifested only in relation to *the nature and circumstances of the object*; and the sense of agreeableness being in the correlation of the two, *the*

*sense of the most agreeable* or *choice* is such a perfect union of the two, that, having described the object in its nature and circumstances in relation to *the most agreeable*, we have comprehended in this the *state of mind*. On the other hand, the nature and circumstances of the object, in relation to the most agreeable, can be known only by the state of mind produced by the presence of the object and its circumstances. To give an example, — let a rose be the object. When I describe

the beauty and agreeableness of this object, I describe the ***state of mind*** in relation to it; for its beauty and agreeableness are identical with the sensations and emotions which I experience, — hence, in philosophical language, called the ***secondary*** qualities of the object: and so, on the other hand, if I describe my sensations and emotions in the presence of the rose, I do in fact describe its beauty and agreeableness. The mind and object are thus united in the sense of



agreeableness. I could not have this sense of agreeableness without an object; but when the object is presented to my mind, they are so made for each other, that they seem to melt together in the pleasurable emotion. The sense of the most agreeable or choice maybe illustrated in the same way. The only difference between the agreeable simply and the most agreeable is this: the agreeable refers merely to an emotion awakened on the immediate presentation of an object, without any comparison or



negative, the phrase *most agreeable* or *greatest apparent good* is convenient for general use, and sufficiently precise to express every case which comes up.

It may be well here to remark, that in the system we are thus endeavoring to state and to illustrate, the word *choice* is properly used to express the action of will, when that action is viewed in relation to its immediate effects, — as when I say, I choose to walk. *The sense of the most agreeable,* is properly used to express

the same action, when the action is viewed in relation to its own cause. Choice and volition are the words in common use, because men at large only think of choice and volition in reference to effects. But when the cause of choice is sought after by a philosophic mind, and is supposed to lie in the nature and circumstances of mind and object, then the *sense of the most agreeable* becomes the most appropriate form of expression.

Edwards concludes his discussion of the cause of

the most agreeable, by remarking: “However, I think so much is certain, — that volition, in no one instance that can be mentioned, is otherwise than the greatest apparent good is, in the manner which has been explained.” This is the great principle of his system; and, a few sentences after, he states it as an axiom, or a generally admitted truth: “There is scarcely a plainer and more universal dictate of the sense and experience of mankind, than that when men act voluntarily and do what they please, then they

do what suits them best, or what is most agreeable to them.” Indeed, Edwards cannot be considered as having attempted to prove this; he has only explained it, and therefore it is only the *explanation* of a supposed axiom that we have been following out.

This supposed axiom is really announced in the first section: “Will and desire do not run counter at all: the thing which he wills, the very same he desires;” that is, a man wills as he desires, and of course wills what is most agreeable to him. It is to be

noticed, also, that the title of part I. runs as follows: “Wherein are explained and stated various terms and things, &c.” Receiving it, therefore, as a generally admitted truth, “that choice or volition is always as the most agreeable,” and is itself only the sense of the most agreeable, what is the explanation given?

1. That will, or the faculty of choice, is not a faculty distinct from the affections or passions, or that part of our being which philosophers sometimes call the sensitivity.

2. That volition, or choice,





only the most agreeable, — so that the volition becomes again the *sense or feeling of the greatest apparent good*. There is in all this only a variety of expressions for the same affection of the sensitivity.

4. Determination of will is actual choice, or the production in the mind of volition, or choice, or the strongest affection, or the sense of the most agreeable, or of the greatest apparent good. It is therefore an effect, and must have a determiner or cause.

5. This determiner or cause is called motive. In explaining what constitutes the motive, we must take into view both *mind* and *object*. The object must be perceived by the mind as something existent. This perception, however, is only preliminary, or a mere introduction of the object to the mind. Now, in order that the sense of the most agreeable, or choice, may take place, the mind and object must be suited to each other; they must be correlatives. The object must possess qualities of beauty and agreeableness





place; and thus, as we say, the cause of passion is the object of passion: so we say also, in common parlance, the cause of choice is the object of choice ; and assigning the affections of the mind springing up in the presence of the object, to the object, as descriptive of its qualities, we say that choice is always as the most beautiful and agreeable; that is, as the greatest apparent good. This greatest apparent good, thus *objectively* described, is the motive, or determiner, or cause of volition.

*In what sense the Will follows the last dictate of the Understanding.*

“It appears from these things, that in some sense *the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding.* But then the understanding must be taken in a large sense, as including the whole faculty of perception or apprehension, and not merely what is called *reason* or *judgment.* If by the dictate of the understanding is meant what reason declares to be

best, or most for the person's happiness, taking in the whole of its duration, it is not true that the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding. Such a dictate of reason is quite a different matter from things appearing now most *agreeable*, all things being put together which relates to the mind's present perceptions in any respect." (p. 25.) The "large sense" in which Edwards takes the understanding, embraces the whole intellectual and sensitive being. In the production of

choice, or the sense of the most agreeable, the suggestions of reason may have their influence, and may work in with other particulars to bring about the result; but then they are subject to the same condition with the other particulars, — they must appear, at the moment and in the immediate circumstances, the most agreeable. It is not enough that they come from reason, and are true and right; they must likewise *suit the state of the mind*, — for as choice is the sense of the most



agreeable, that only as an object can tend to awaken this sense, which is properly and agreeably related to the feelings of the subject. Where the suggestions of reason are not agreeably related, “the act of the will is determined in opposition to it.” (ibid.)

**“Sec. 3: Concerning the  
meaning of the terms  
Necessity, Impossibility,  
Inability, &C. AND OF  
CONTINGENCE.”**

After having settled his



or vulgar use ; 2. Necessity as understood in the philosophical or metaphysical use.

1. In common use, ***necessity*** “is a relative term, and relates to some supposed opposition made to the existence of a thing, — which opposition is overcome or proves insufficient to hinder or alter it. The word ***impossible*** is manifestly a relative term, and has reference to supposed power exerted to bring a thing to pass which is insufficient for the effect. The word ***unable*** is

relative, and has relation to ability, or endeavour, which is insufficient. The word *irresistible* is relative, and has reference to resistance which is made, or may be made, to some force or power tending to an effect, and is insufficient to withstand the power or hinder the effect. The common notion of necessity and impossibility implies *something that frustrates endeavour or desire.*”

He then distinguishes this necessity into *general and particular.* “Things

are necessary *in general*, which are or will be, notwithstanding any supposable opposition, from whatever quarter e. g. that God will judge the world.

“Things are necessary *to us* which are or will be, notwithstanding all opposition supposable in the *case from us*.” This is *particular* necessity: e. g. any event which I cannot hinder. In the discussions “about liberty and moral agency,” the word is used especially in a particular sense, because we are concerned in these

discussions *as*  
*individuals.*

According to this *common use* of necessity in the *particular* sense, “When we speak of anything necessary *to us*, it is with relation to some supposable opposition *to our will*,” and “a thing is said to be necessary” in this sense “when we cannot help it, do what *we will* .” So also a thing is said to be *impossible to us* when we cannot do it, although we make the attempt, — that is, put forth the volition; and *irresistible to us*, which, when we put forth a

volition to hinder it, overcomes the opposition: and we are *unable* to do a thing “when our supposable desires and endeavours are insufficient,” — are not followed by any effect. In the common or vulgar use of these terms, we are not considering volition in relation to its own cause ; but we are considering volition as itself a cause in relation to its own effects: e. g. suppose a question be raised, whether a certain man can raise a certain weight, — if it be affirmed that it is *impossible* for

him to raise it, that he has not the *ability* to raise it, and that the weight will *necessarily* keep its position, — no reference whatever is made to the production of a volition or choice to raise it, but solely to the connexion between the *volition* and the *raising of the weight*. Now Edwards remarks, that this common use of the term necessity and its cognates being habitual, is likely to enter into and confound our reasonings on subjects where it is inadmissible from the nature of the case. We



must therefore be careful to discriminate, (p. 27.)

2. In metaphysical or philosophical use, necessity is not a *relative*, but an *absolute term*. In this use necessity applies “in cases wherein no insufficient will is supposed, or can be supposed; but the very nature of the supposed case itself excludes any opposition, will, or endeavour.” (ibid.) Thus it is used “with respect to God’s existence before the creation of the world, when there was no other being.” *“Metaphysical or philosophical necessity is*

nothing different from certainty, — not the certainty of knowledge, but the certainty of things in themselves, which is the foundation of the certainty of knowledge, or that wherein lies the ground of the infallibility of the proposition which affirms them.

Philosophical necessity is really nothing else than the full and fixed connexion between the things signified by the subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms something to be true ; and in *this sense* I use the word necessity, in the

following discourse, when I endeavour to prove *that necessity is not inconsistent with liberty.*” (p. 27, 28, 29.)

“The subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms the existence of something, may have a full, fixed, and certain connexion, in several ways.”

“1. They may have a full and perfect connexion *in and of themselves.* So God’s infinity and other attributes are necessary. So it is necessary, *in its own nature,* that two and two should be four.”

2. The subject and predicate of a proposition, affirming the existence of something which is *already* come to pass, are fixed and certain.

3. The subject and predicate of a proposition may be fixed and certain *consequently*, — and so the existence of the things affirmed may be “consequently necessary.” “Things which are *perfectly connected* with the things that are necessary, are necessary themselves, by a necessity of consequence.” This is logical necessity.

“And here it may be observed, that all things which are future, or which will hereafter begin to be, which can be said to be necessary, are necessary only in this last way,”—that is, “by a **connexion** with something that is necessary in its own nature, or something that already is or has been. This is the necessity which especially belongs to controversies about acts of the will.” (p. 30.)

Philosophical necessity is **general** and **particular**.

1. “The existence of a thing may be said to be

necessary with a *general* necessity, when all things considered there is a foundation for the certainty of its existence.” This is unconditional necessity in the strictest sense.

2. *Particular* necessity refers to “things that happen to particular persons, in the existence of which no will of theirs has any concern, at least at that time; which, whether they are necessary or not with regard to things in general, yet are necessary to them, and with regard to any volition of theirs at that time, as they prevent all

acts of the will about the affair.” (p. 31.) This particular necessity is absolute to the individual, because his will has nothing to do with it — whether it be absolute or not in the general sense, does not affect his case.

“What has been said to show the meaning of terms *necessary* and *necessity*, may be sufficient for the explaining of the opposite terms *impossible* and *impossibility*. For there is no difference, but only the latter are negative and the former positive.” (ibid.)

## *Inability and Unable,*

“It has been observed that these terms in their original and common use, have relation to will and endeavour, as supposable in the case.” That is have relation to the connexion of volition with effects. “But as these terms are often used by philosophers and divines, especially writers on controversies about free will, they are used in a quite different and far more extensive sense, and are applied to many cases wherein no will or endeavour for the bringing



of the thing to pass is or can be supposed:" e. g. The connexion between volitions and their causes or motives.

## *Contingent and Contingency.*

“Anything is said to be contingent, or to come to pass by chance or accident, in the original meaning of such words, when its connexion with its causes or antecedents, according to the established course of things, is not discerned; and so is what we have no means of foreseeing. But



the use of a certain philosophical school,— he affirms that contingency is used to express absolutely no cause ; or, that some events are represented as existing without any cause or ground of their existence. This will be examined in its proper place. I am now only stating Edwards's opinions, not discussing them.

#### **Sec. 4: Of the Distinction of natural and moral Necessity and Inability.**

We now return to the

question: — Is the connexion between motive and volition necessary?

The term necessary, in its common or vulgar use, does not relate to this question, for in that use as we have seen, it refers to the connexion between volition considered as a cause, and its effects. In this question, we are considering volition as an effect in relation to its cause or the motive. If the connexion then of motive and volition be necessary, it must be necessary in the philosophical or metaphysical sense of the

term.

Now this philosophical necessity Edwards does hold to characterize the connexion of motive and volition. This section opens with the following distinction of philosophical necessity: "That necessity which has been explained, consisting in an infallible connexion of the things signified by the subject and predicate of a proposition, as intelligent beings are the subjects of it, is distinguished into *moral* and *natural* necessity." He then appropriates *moral* *philosophical*

***necessity*** to express the nature of the connexion between motive and volition: "And sometimes by moral necessity is meant that necessity of connexion and ***consequence*** which arises from ***moral causes***, as the strength of inclination, or motives, and the connexion which there is in many cases between these, and such certain volitions and actions. And it is in ***this*** sense that I use the phrase ***moral necessity*** in the following discourse." (p. 32.)

***Natural philosophical*** necessity as distinguished

from this, he employs to characterize the connexion between natural causes and phenomena of our being, as the connexion of external objects with our various sensations, and the connexion between truth and our assent or belief. (p. 33.)

In employing the term *moral*, however, he does not intend to intimate that it affects at all the absoluteness of the necessity which it distinguishes ; on the contrary, he affirms that “moral necessity may be as absolute as natural

necessity. That is, the effect may be as perfectly connected with its moral cause, as a natural necessary effect is with its natural cause. It must be allowed that there maybe such a thing as a **sure** and **perfect** connexion between moral causes and effects ; so this only (i. e. the sure and perfect connexion,) is what I call by the name of **moral necessity** (p. 33.).

Nor does he intend “that when a **moral** habit or motive is so strong that the act of the will infallibly follows, this is not owing to



the *nature of things*." But these terms, moral and natural, are convenient to express a difference which really exists; a difference, however, which "does not lie so much in the nature of the *connexion* as in the two terms *connected*." Indeed, he soon after admits "that choice in *many cases* arises from nature, as truly as other events." His sentiment is plainly this — choice lies in the great system and chain of nature as truly as any other phenomenon, arising from its antecedent and having its consequents or



observed, that in what has been explained, as signified by the name of *moral necessity*, the word *necessity* is not used according to the original design and meaning of the word; for, as was observed before, such terms, *necessary*, *impossible*, *irresistible*, &c. in common speech, and their most proper sense, are always relative, having reference to some supposable voluntary opposition or endeavour, that is insufficient. But no such opposition, or contrary will and



whether an opposing or resisting will can overcome this necessity.” (p. 35.)

This passage is clear and full. Common necessity, or necessity in the original use of the word, refers to the connexion between volition and its effects; for here an opposition to will is supposable. I may choose or will to raise a weight; but the gravity opposed to my endeavour overcomes it, and I find it *impossible* for me to raise it, and the weight *necessarily* remains in its place. In this common use of these terms, the *impossibility*

and the *necessity* are *relative to* my volition; but in the production of choice itself, or volition, or the sense of the most agreeable, there is no reference to voluntary endeavour. Choice is not the cause of itself: it cannot be conceived of as struggling with itself in its own production. The cause of volition does not lie within the sphere of volition itself; if any opposition, therefore, were made to the production of a volition, it could not be made by a volition. The mind, with given



falling of a stone which is thrown into the air; as the freezing or boiling of water at given temperatures ; as sensations of sight, sound, smell, taste, and feeling, when the organs of sense and the objects of sense are brought together. The application of the epithet *moral* to the necessity of volition, evidently does not alter in the least the character of that necessity. It is still philosophical and absolute necessity, and as sure and perfect as natural necessity. This we have seen he expressly admits, (p. 33;) affirming, (p. 34,)



that the difference between a moral and natural necessity is a mere difference in the “two terms connected,” and not a difference “*in the nature of the connexion*”

### *Natural and moral Inability.*

“What has been said of natural and moral necessity, may serve to explain what is intended by natural and moral *inability*. We are said to be *naturally* unable to do a thing, when we cannot

do it if we will, because what is most commonly called *nature* does not allow of it, or because of some impeding defect or obstacle that is extrinsic to the will; either in the faculty of the understanding, constitution of body, or external objects.” (p. 35.) We may make a voluntary endeavour to *know* something, and may find ourselves *unable*, through a defect of the understanding. We may make a voluntary effort *to do* something by the instrumentality of our

hand, and may find ourselves unable through a defect of the bodily constitution; or external objects may be regarded as presenting such a counter force as to overcome the force we exert. This is natural inability; this is all we mean by it. It must be remarked too, that this is *inability* not *metaphysically* or *philosophically* considered, and therefore not *absolute* inability; but only inability in the common and vulgar acceptation of the term — a *relative* inability, relative



when a person is unable to will or choose such a thing, through a defect of motives, or prevalence of contrary motives, it is the same thing as his being unable through the want of an inclination, or the prevalence of a contrary inclination, in such circumstances and under the influence of such views.” (ibid.)

The inability in this case does not relate to the connexion between volition and its consequents and effects; *but to the production of the volition itself.* Now the

inability to the production of a volition, cannot be affirmed of the volition, because it is not yet supposed to exist, and as an effect cannot be conceived of as producing itself. The inability, therefore, must belong to the causes of volition, or to the motive. But motive, as we have seen, lies in the *state of the mind*, and in the *nature and circumstances of the object*; and choice or volition exists when, in the correlation of mind and object, the sense of the most agreeable is



mind. On the part of the mind, there is either a want of inclination to the object, or a stronger inclination towards another object: on the part of the object, there is a want of interesting and agreeable qualities to the *particular state* of mind in question, or a *suitableness* to a different state of mind: and this constitutes “the want of sufficient motives in view, to induce and excite the act of will, or the strength of apparent motives to the contrary.” And both these may clearly be resolved into one, that above



mentioned, viz. a want of inclination on the part of the mind to the object, and a stronger inclination towards another object; or, as Edwards expresses it, “the opposition or want of inclination.” For a want of inclination to one object, implying a stronger inclination to another object, expresses that the ***state of the mind***, and the nature and circumstances of the one object, are not correlated ; but that the ***state of mind***, and the nature and circumstances of the other object, are correlated.

The first, is a “want of sufficient motives the second, stronger “motives to the contrary.” Moral inability lies entirely out of the sphere of volition; volition, therefore, cannot produce or relieve it, for this would suppose an effect to modify its cause, and that too before the effect itself has any existence. Moral inability is a *metaphysical* inability: it is the perfect and fixed impossibility of certain laws and principles of being, leading to certain volitions; and is contrasted with *physical inability*,

which is the established impossibility of a certain volition, producing a certain effect. So we may say, that *moral ability* is the certain and fixed connexion between certain laws and principles of being, and volitions; and is contrasted with *natural ability*, which is the established connexion between certain volitions and certain effects.

Moral inability, although transcending the sphere of volition, is a *real inability*. Where it exists, there is the absolute impossibility of a given



instances in illustration of moral inability.

“A woman of great honour and chastity may have a moral inability to prostitute herself to her slave.” (ibid.) There is no correlation between *the state of her mind* and *the act* which forms the object contemplated, — of course the sense of the most agreeable or choice cannot take place; and while the state of her mind remains the same, and the act and its circumstances remain the same, there is, on the principle of Edwards, an utter inability

to the choice, and of course to the consequents of the choice.

“A child of great love and duty to his parents, may be thus unable to kill his father.” (ibid.) This case is similar to the preceding.

“A very lascivious man, in case of certain opportunities and temptations, and in the absence of such and such restraints, may be unable to forbear gratifying his lust.” There is here a correlation between *the state of mind* and the *object*, in its *nature and circumstances*, — and of

course the sense of the most agreeable or choice takes place.

There is a *moral ability* to the choice, and a *moral inability* to forbear, or to choose the opposite.

“A drunkard, under such and such circumstances, may be unable to forbear taking strong drink.” (ibid.) This is similar to the last.

“A very malicious man may be unable to exert benevolent acts to an enemy, or to desire his prosperity; yea, some may be so under the power of a vile disposition, that they may be unable to love those





36.) “On the other hand, a great degree of habitual wickedness may lay a man under an inability to love and choose holiness, and render him *utterly unable* to love an infinitely Holy Being, or to choose and cleave to him as the chief good.” (ibid.) The love and choice of holiness is necessarily produced by the correlation of the mind with holiness; and the love and choice of holiness is *utterly impossible* when this correlation does not exist. Where a moral inability to evil exists, nothing can be more sure

and fixed than this inability. The individual who is the subject of it has absolutely no power to alter it. If he were to proceed to alter it, he would have to put forth a volition to this effect; but this would be an evil volition, and by supposition the individual has no ability to evil volitions.

Where a moral inability to good exists, nothing can be more sure and fixed than this inability. The individual who is the subject of it, has absolutely no power to alter it. If he

were to proceed to alter it, he would have to put forth a volition to this effect; but this would be a good volition, and by supposition the individual has no ability to good volitions.

***General and habitual,  
particular and  
occasional Inability.***

The first consists “in a fixed and habitual inclination, or an habitual and stated defect or want of a certain kind of inclination, (p. 36.)

The second is “an

inability of the will or heart to a particular act, through the strength or defect of present motives, or of inducements presented to the view of the understanding, ***on this occasion.***" (ibid.)

An habitual drunkard, and a man habitually sober, on some ***particular occasion*** getting drunk, are instances of general and particular inability. In the first instance, the ***state*** of the man's mind has become correlated to the object; under all times and circumstances ***it is fixed.*** In the second instance, the

***state*** of the man's mind is correlated to the object only when presented on certain occasions and under certain circumstances. In both instances, however, the choice is necessary, — “it not being possible, in any case, that the will should at present go against the motive which has now, all things considered, the greatest advantage to induce it.”

“Will and endeavour against, or diverse from ***present*** acts of the will, are in no case supposable, whether those acts be

*occasional* or *habitual* ; for that would be to suppose the will at present to be otherwise than at present it is.” (ibid.)

The passage which follows deserves particular attention. It may be brought up under the following question:

Although will cannot be exerted against present acts of the will, yet can present acts of the will be exerted to produce future acts of the will, opposed to present habitual or present occasional acts ?

“But yet there may be will and endeavour against

*future* acts of the will, or volitions that are likely to take place, as viewed at a distance. It is no contradiction, to suppose that the acts of the will at one time may be against the act of the will at another time; and there may be desires and endeavours to prevent or excite future acts of the will; but such desires and endeavours are in many cases rendered insufficient and vain through fixedness of habit: when the occasion returns, the strength of habit overcomes and baffles all such opposition.”





most agreeable, and lead him to avoid the occasions of drunkenness, and to form resolutions of amendment; but when the appetite and longing for drink returns, and he comes again in the way of indulgence, then these considerations, brought fairly into collision with his habits, are overcome, and drinking, as the most agreeable, asserts its supremacy.

“But it may be comparatively easy to make an alteration with respect to such future acts as are only *occasional* and

***transient***; because the occasional or transient cause, if foreseen, may often easily be prevented or avoided.” (ibid.)

In the case of occasional drunkenness, for instance, the habitual correlation is not of mind and strong drink, but of mind and considerations of honour, prudence, and virtue. But strong drink being associated on some occasion with objects which are correlated to the mind, — as hospitality, friendship, or festive celebrations, — may obtain the mastery; and in this



inability that attends fixed habits, especially obtains the name of *inability*. And then, as the will may remotely and indirectly resist itself, and do it in vain, in the case of strong habits; so reason may resist present acts of the will, and its resistance be insufficient: and this is more commonly the case, also, when the acts arise from strong habit.” (ibid.)

In every act of the will, the will at the moment is unable to act otherwise; it is in the strictest sense true, that a man, at the moment of his acting, must



*Common usage with  
respect to the phrase  
WANT OF POWER or  
INABILITY to act in a  
certain way.*

“But it must be observed concerning *moral inability*, in each kind of it, that the word *inability* is used in a sense very diverse from its original import. The word signifies only a natural inability, in the proper use of it; and is applied to such cases only wherein a present will or inclination to the thing, with respect to which a

person is said to be unable, is supposable. It cannot be truly said, *according to the ordinary use of language*, that a malicious man, let him be never so malicious, cannot hold his hand from striking, or that he is not able to show his neighbour a kindness; or that a drunkard, let his appetite be never so strong, cannot keep the cup from his mouth. *In the strictest propriety of speech, a man has a thing in his power if he has it in his choice or at his election ; and a man cannot be*

*truly said to be unable to do a thing, when he can do it if he will”* (ibid.)

Men, in the common use of language, and in the expression of their common and generally received sentiments, affirm that an individual has anything in his power when it can be controlled by volition. Their conception of power does not arise from the connexion of volition with its cause, but from the connexion of volition as itself a cause with its effects. Thus the hand of a malicious man







to say that a man is unable to exert the acts of the will themselves, or unable to produce volitions. To say that a man has power to produce volitions, would imply that he has power to will volitions; but this would make one volition the cause of another, which is absurd. But, as it is absurd to represent the will as the cause of its own volitions, and of course to say that the man has ability to produce his volitions, it must be absurd likewise to represent the man as *unable*, in any particular case, to produce volitions,

for this would imply that in other cases he is able. Nay, the very language is self-contradictory. If a man produce volitions, he must produce them by volitions; and if in any case he is affirmed to be unable to produce volitions, then this inability must arise from a want of connexion between the volition by which the required volition is aimed to be produced, and the required volition itself. So that to affirm that he is unable to will is equivalent to saying, that he cannot will *if he will*—a proposition which grants



human agent, “to ascribe a non-performance to the want of power or ability,” or to the want of motives, (for this is plainly his meaning,)

“is not just,” “because the thing wanting,” that is, immediately wanting, and wanting so far as the agent himself can be the subject of remark in respect of it, “is not a being *able*,” that is, a having the requisite motives, or the moral ability, “but a being *willing*, or the act of volition, itself, To the act of volition, or the fact of ‘being willing,’ ” there is no



still if it is true that there is such a connexion between the volition and the thing to be done, that the moment the volition takes place the thing is done ; then, according to Edwards, the man may be affirmed to be able to do it with the only ability that can be affirmed of him.

We can exert power only by exerting will, that is by putting forth volitions,— by choosing, of course we cannot exert power over those motives which are themselves the causes of our volitions. We are not *unable* to do anything in



the proper and original and legitimate use of the word when, for the want of motive, we are not the subjects of the volition required as the immediate antecedent of the thing to be done; but we are *unable* in this use when, although the volition be made; still, through some impediment, the thing is not done. We are conscious of power, or of the want of power only in the connexion between our actual volitions and their objects.

## “Sec. 5: Concerning the Notion of Liberty, AND OF MORAL AGENCY.”

What is liberty? “The plain and obvious meaning of the words *freedom* and *liberty*, in common speech, is *power, opportunity, or advantage that any one has to do as he pleases*. Or, in other words, his being free from hindrance, or impediment in the way of doing, or conducting in any way as he wills. And the *contrary* to liberty, whatever name we call it



determined by some internal antecedent volition, or whether it happened without a cause ; whether it was necessarily connected with something foregoing, or not connected. Let the person come by his choice anyhow, yet if he is able, and there is nothing in the way to hinder his pursuing and executing his will, the man is perfectly free, according to the primary and common notion of freedom.” (p. 39.)

This is Edwards’s definition of liberty, and he has given it with a



his intellect and tongue obey, and frame and express sentences. If his legs were bound, he would not be free. If his tongue were tied with a thong, or his mouth gagged, he would not be free; or if his intellect were paralyzed or disordered, he would not be free. If there should be anything preventing the volition from taking effect, he would not be free.

*Of what can the  
attribute of Liberty be  
affirmed?*

From the definition thus

given Edwards remarks, “It will follow, that in propriety of speech, neither liberty, nor its contrary, can properly be ascribed to any being or thing, but that which has such a faculty, power, or property, as is called will. For that which is possessed of no *will*, cannot have any power or opportunity of doing *according to its will*, nor be necessitated to act contrary to its will, nor be restrained from acting agreeable to it. And therefore to talk of liberty, or the contrary, as belonging to the *very will*

*itself* is not to speak good sense; for the *will itself* is not an agent that has *a will*. The power of choosing itself, has not a power of choosing. That which has the power of volition is the man, or the soul, and not the power of volition itself. And he that has the liberty, is the agent who is possessed of the will; and not the will which he is possessed of.” (p. 38.) Liberty is the attribute of the agent, because the agent is the spiritual essence or being who is the subject of the power or capacity of choice, and his



liberty consists as we have seen in the unimpeded connexion between the volitions produced in him and the objects of those volitions. Hence, *free will* is an objectionable phrase. *Free agent* is the proper phrase, that is, an agent having the power of choice and whose choice reaches effects.

### *Moral Agent.*

“A *moral agent* is a being that is capable of those actions that have a *moral* quality, and which can properly be

denominated good or evil in a moral sense, virtuous or vicious, commendable or faulty.” (p. 39.)

In what lies the capability of actions having a moral quality ?

“To moral agency belongs a *moral faculty*, or sense of moral good and evil, or of such a thing as desert or worthiness, of praise or blame, reward or punishment; and a capacity which an agent has of being influenced in his actions by moral inducements or motives, exhibited to the view of the understanding or reason, to engage to a







statement of Edwards's system, nearly in his own words, as contained in part I. of his work. The remarks and explanations which have been thrown in, I hope will serve to make him more perfectly understood. This end will be still more fully attained by presenting on the basis of the foregoing investigation and statement, a compend of his psychological system, independently of the order there pursued, and without largely introducing quotations, which have already been abundantly

made.

## COMPEND OF EDWARDS'S PSYCHOLOGICAL SYSTEM.

I. There are two cardinal faculties of the mind.

1. The intellectual — called reason or understanding. 2. The active and feeling — called will or affections.

II. The relation of these to each other. The first precedes the second in the order of exercise. The first perceives and knows objects in their qualities,

circumstances, and relations. The second experiences emotions and passions, or desires and choices, in relation to the objects perceived.

III. Perception is necessary. When the understanding and its objects are brought together, perception takes place according to the constituted laws of the intelligence.

IV. The acts of will or the affections are necessary. When this faculty of our being and its objects are



brought together, volition or choice, emotions, passions, or desires take place, according to the constituted nature and laws of this faculty.

The objects and this faculty are correlates. In relation to the object, we may call this faculty subject. When subject and object are suited to each other, that is, are agreeable, affections are produced which we call pleasant; when they are not suited, that is, are disagreeable, affections take place which are unpleasant or painful.

Every object in relation to subject, is agreeable or disagreeable, and produces accordingly, in general, affections pleasant or painful.

In the perfection and harmony of our being, this correspondence is universal; that is, what is known to be agreeable is felt to be pleasant; — what is known to be disagreeable is felt to be painful. But, in the corruption of our being, this is reversed in respect of moral objects. Although what is right is known to be agreeable, that is, suited to us, it is felt to be painful.





VI. The affections of the will stand connected with changes or effects in other parts of our being, as stated antecedents. First, they stand thus connected with muscular action, — as walking, talking, striking, resisting, &c. Secondly, they stand thus connected with mental operations, — as fixing the attention upon any subject of thought and investigation, or upon any imagination, or any idea of the memory.

VII. The affections of the will, when thus connected with effects in other parts

of our being, have a peculiar and striking characteristic. It is this: that the effect contemplated takes place at the moment it appears the most agreeable, — the greatest apparent good; which, as Edwards uses these phrases, means, that at the moment the effect contemplated produces the most pleasant affection, — the most intense sense of the agreeable, — it takes place. Thus, when walking seems most pleasant, we walk ; when talking, we talk; when thinking on a particular subject, then we

think on that subject. Such is the constitution and law of our being. The play of the different parts is reciprocal. Perception must bring up the objects, and the affections of will immediately follow. The most agreeable are dwelt upon by the mind, and perception again takes place particularly with regard to these; and according as objects affect the will, do all the activities of our being come forth.

VIII. Various terms and phrases in common use can be easily explained by this

system: — **Choice** is the sense or the affection of the most pleasant and agreeable. **Preference** is its synonyme, with scarcely a shade of difference. They both have respect to the **act of selection**. **Volition** is another name for this affection of will, and is used more particularly in relation to effects or changes following the affection. **Desire** is a nascent choice. The strongest desire, at a given moment, is choice. **Emotion** is an affection, pleasant or painful, according to the quality of





*Passion* is emotion accompanied by desire in reference to other relations with the object. Thus the emotion of beauty awakened by a flower may be accompanied by the desire of possessing it; and if this desire becomes the strongest desire at the moment, then the passion has the characteristic which makes it choice, and some corresponding effects take place in order to possess it, — as walking towards it, stretching out the hand, &c.

*The determination of*

*will* is the production or causation of choice. It is used in reference to the immediate and particular choice, in opposition to all other choices.

*The will itself* is the capacity of being affected by objects with emotion, passion, and desire,— and with that form of passion which we call the sense of the most agreeable or choice, and which is connected with effects or consequents as their stated antecedent.

*The motive* is the cause of choice, and is complex. It lies in the nature and



the attribute of the man — the human soul. The man is free when his volitions or choices are unimpeded, — when, upon choosing to walk, he walks, &c. The man is not free, or is under necessity, when his volitions or choices are impeded, — when, upon choosing to walk, he finds his legs bound or paralyzed, &c. Then it is *impossible* for him to walk, — then he has *no liberty* to walk, — then he is under a *necessity* of remaining in one place.

Necessity in any other use is *metaphysical* or

*philosophical* necessity, and is applied out of the sphere of the will: as the necessity of truth, — the necessity of being, — the necessary connexion of cause and effect. Hence,

The *connexion* between volitions or choices, or the sense of the most agreeable with the motive or cause, is *necessary* with a philosophical necessity. The necessity of volitions in reference to motives is also called *moral* necessity. This term *moral* is given, not in reference to the *nature* of the connexion, but in reference

to the *terms* connected. Volitions belonging to responsible and moral beings are thus distinguished from those phenomena which we commonly call *natural*.

XI. An agent is that which produces effects.

A *natural* agent is that which produces effects without volition. A *moral* agent is one producing effects by volitions, accompanied with an intellectual perception of the volitions and their effects, as right or wrong, and a sense of desert, or of

praiseworthiness, or  
blameworthiness, on  
account of the volitions and  
their effects.

***Brutes*** or irresponsible  
beings are agents that have  
volitions, but have no  
reason to perceive right  
and wrong, and  
consequently have no sense  
of desert; and as they  
cannot perceive right and  
wrong, they cannot be  
made the subjects of moral  
appeals and inducements.

XII. Moral responsibility  
arises first, from the  
possession of reason;  
secondly, from the capacity



of choice; thirdly, from natural ability.

Natural ability exists when the effect or act commanded to be accomplished has an established connexion with volition or choice. Thus we say a man has natural ability to walk, because if he chooses to walk, he walks. Natural ability differs from freedom only in this: — The first refers to an established connexion between volitions and effects. The second refers to an absence of all impediment, or of all resisting forces from

between volitions and effects.

Hence a man is *naturally unable* to do anything when there is no established connexion between volition and that thing. A man is naturally unable to push a mountain from its seat. He has no *liberty* to move his arm when it is bound.

*Moral* inability is metaphysical or philosophical inability. Philosophical inability in general refers to the impossibility of a certain effect for the want of a cause, or an adequate

cause. Thus there is a philosophical inability of transmuting metal; or of restoring the decay of old age to the freshness and vigour of youth, because we have no cause by which such effects can be produced. There is a philosophical inability also, to pry up a rock of a hundred tons weight with a pine lath, and by the hand of a single man, because we have not an adequate cause. ***Moral inability*** relates to the connexion between motives and volitions in distinction from natural ability, which

relates to the connexion between volitions and actions consequent upon them: but the term moral as we have seen, does not characterize the *nature* of the *connexion*, — it only expresses the *quality* of *terms connected*. Hence *moral* inability, as philosophical inability, is the impossibility of a certain volition or choice for the want of a motive or cause, or an adequate motive. Thus there is a moral philosophical inability of Paul denying Jesus Christ, for there is plainly no motive or cause

to produce a volition to such an act. There is a moral philosophical inability also, of a man selling an estate for fifty dollars which is worth fifty thousand, because the motive is not adequate to produce a volition to such an act.

Philosophical necessity and inability are absolute in respect of us, because beyond the sphere of our volition.

XIII. Praiseworthiness or virtue, blameworthiness or guilt, apply only to volitions. This indeed is not



all. Thus, for instance, if the vice of a *vicious act of will* lies not in the nature of the act, but in the cause, so that its being of a bad nature will not make it at all our fault, unless it arises from some faulty determination of ours as its cause, or something in us that is our fault, &c.” (page 190.) “Disposition of mind,” or inclination, — “acts of the mind,” “acts of will,” here obviously mean the same thing ; that is, they mean volition or choice, and are distinguished from their cause or motive. The





our volitions that we receive praise for well-doing, or blame for evil-doing. If these volitions are in accordance with conscience and the law of God, they are right; if not, they are wrong, and we are judged accordingly. The *metaphysical* questions, how the volition was produced, and what is the character of the cause, is the cause praiseworthy or blameworthy, are questions which transcend the sphere of our volitions, our actions, our personality, our responsibility. We are

concerned only with this:  
—Do *we* do right? do *we*  
do wrong ? What is the  
*nature of our volitions* ?  
Nor does the *necessary*  
*connexion* between the  
motives and the volitions,  
destroy the  
blameworthiness and the  
praiseworthiness of the  
volitions. We are  
blameworthy or  
praiseworthy according to  
the character of the  
volitions in themselves,  
considered and judged  
according to the rule of  
right, without considering  
how these volitions came to  
exist. The last inquiry is





to exist. The metaphysical or philosophical inquiry respecting the correlation of the state of the will and any action, or respecting the want of such a correlation, is foreign to the question of duty and responsibility. This

question relates only to the volition and its connexion with its consequents.

This does not clash at all with the common sentiment that our actions are to be judged of by our motives; for this sentiment does not respect volitions in relation to their cause, but external actions in

relation to the volitions which produce them. These external actions may be in themselves good, but they may not be what was willed; some other force or power may have come in between the volition and its object, and changed the circumstances of the object, so as to bring about an event different from the will or intention ; although being in connexion with the agent, it may still be attributed to his will: or the immediate act which appears good, may, in the mind of the agent be merely part of an extended



upon his conduct, we must know what effects he really intends or wills, or desires, that is, what it is which is really connected in his mind with the sense of the most agreeable.

### *Edwards and Locke,*

Their systems are one: there is no difference in the principle. Edwards represents the will as necessarily determined — so does Locke. Edwards places liberty in the unimpeded connexion of volition with its stated sequents — so does Locke.







## 2: THE LEGITIMATE CONSEQUENCES OF EDWARDS'S SYSTEM.

THESE consequences must, I am aware, be deduced with the greatest care and clearness. The deduction must be influenced by no passion or prejudice. It must be purely and severely logical—and such I shall endeavour to make it. I shall begin with a deduction which Edwards has himself made.

I. There is no self-















number to eternal life, and the making of this election sure, are necessary and plain consequences of this system. And as God is a being all-wise and good, we may feel assured in connexion with this system, that, in the working out of his great plan, whatever evil may appear in the progress of its development, the grand consummation will show that all things have been working together for good.

III. It is plainly deducible from this system that moral beings exert an



this subject, then upon the mere fact of volition considered only in its own nature, and wholly independently of its causes, can the processes of justice go forth.

Thus we may view the system in relation both to God and to man.

In relation to God. It makes him supreme and absolute — foreseeing and fore-determining, and bringing everything to pass according to infinite wisdom, and by the energy of an infinite will.

In relation to man. It



to the doing of it but a volition: that he is guilty and punishable for doing anything wrong, because it was done by his volition: that he is praiseworthy and to be rewarded for doing anything right, because it was done by his volition. In vain does he attempt to excuse himself from right-doing on the plea of *moral inability*; this is *metaphysical* inability, and transcends the sphere of volition. He can do it if he will — and therefore he has all the ability required in the case. Nothing is immediately wanting but a

willingness, and all his responsibility relates to this; he can do nothing, can influence nothing, except by will; and therefore that which goes before will is foreign to his consideration, and impossible to his effort.

In vain does he attempt to excuse himself for wrong-doing on the ground of moral *necessity*. This *moral necessity* is *metaphysical* necessity, and transcends the sphere of volition. He could have forborne to do wrong, if he had had the will. Whatever else may have been







believe that they are logical. Let the reader judge for himself, but let him judge *thoughtfully* and *candidly*.

I. The system of Edwards leads to an absolute and unconditional necessity, particular and general.

1. A particular necessity — a necessity absolute in relation to the individual.

It is granted in the system, that the connexion of motive and volition is necessary with an absolute necessity, because this precedes and therefore is not within the reach of the





these muscular movements. So also, when I will to think on a certain subject, I think on that subject. The volition of selecting a subject, and the volition of attending to it, are stated antecedents to that mental operation which we call thought. We have here only another instance of cause and effect, the relation being one as absolute and necessary as any other relation of cause and effect. The curious organism by which a choice or a sense of the most agreeable produces muscular

movement, has not been arranged by any choice of the individual man. The connexion is pre-established for him, and has its cause beyond the sphere of volition. The constitution of mind which connects volition with thinking is also pre-established, and beyond the sphere of volition. As the volition itself appears by an absolute necessity in relation to the individual man, so also do the stated sequents or effects of volition appear by an absolute necessity in relation to him.

It is true, indeed, that the connexion between volition and its objects may be interrupted by forces coming between, or overcome by superior forces, but this is common to cause and effect, and forms no peculiar characteristic; it is a lesser force *necessarily* interrupted or overcome by a greater. Besides, the interruption or the overcoming of a force does not prove its freedom when it is unimpeded; its movement may still be necessitated by an antecedent force. And this

















and surely determined in everything by *supreme* wisdom, then it is in everything *necessarily determined* to that which is *most* wise.” (p. 230.)

That the universe is governed by infinite wisdom, is a glorious and satisfactory thought, and is abundantly contended for by this system ; but still it is a government of necessity. This may be regarded as the most excellent government, and if it be so regarded it may fairly be contended for. Let us not, however, wander from the question, and in





volition, every event, must be traced up to a first and final cause, and this must be necessary and infinite wisdom.

II. It follows, therefore, from this system, that every volition or event is both necessary, and necessarily the best possible in its place and relations.

The whole system of things had its origin in infinite and necessary wisdom. All volitions and events have their last and efficient cause in infinite and necessary wisdom. All

that has been, all that is, all that can be, are connected by an absolute necessity with the same great source. It would be the height of absurdity to suppose it possible for anything to be different from what it is, or to suppose that any change could make anything better than it is ; for all that is, is by absolute necessity, — and all that is, is just what and where infinite wisdom has made it, and disposed of it.

III. If that which we call evil, in reality be evil, then it must be both necessary



to be otherwise than it is. Now the ground of blameworthiness is not only the perception of the difference between right and wrong, and the conviction that the right *ought* to be done, but the possession of a power to do the right and refrain from the wrong. But if every volition is fixed by an absolute necessity, then neither can the individual be supposed to have power to do otherwise than he actually does, nor, all things considered, can it be supposed there could have been, at that precise

moment and in that precise relation, any other volition. The volition is fixed, and fixed by an infinite and necessary wisdom. We cannot escape from this difficulty by perpetually running the changes of — “He can if he will,” — “He could if he would,” — “There is nothing wanting but a will,” — “He has a natural ability,” &c. &c. Let us not deceive ourselves, and endeavour to stop thought and conclusions by these words, “he can if he will”! but he cannot if he don’t will. The will is wanting, — and while it is

wanting, the required effect cannot appear. And how is that new volition or antecedent to be obtained? The man cannot change one volition for another. By supposition, he has not the moral or metaphysical ability, — and yet this is the only ability that can produce the new volition. It is passing strange that the power upon which volition is absolutely dependent, should be set aside by calling it *metaphysical*, — and the man blamed for an act because the consequent of his volition, when the volition itself is

the necessary consequent of this power ! The man is only in his volition. The volition is good or bad in itself. The cause of volition is none of his concern, because it transcends volition. He can if he will. That is enough for him ! But it is not enough to make him blameable, when whether he will or not depends not only upon an antecedent out of his reach, but the antecedent itself is fixed by a necessity in the divine nature itself.

I am not now disputing the philosophy. The philosophy may be true; it







nature. If this seems contradictory, I cannot help it. It is drawn from the system, and the system alone is responsible for its conclusions.

If it should be replied here, that every system must be subject to the same difficulty, because if evil had a beginning, it must have had a holy cause, inasmuch as it could not exist before it began to exist, — I answer, this would be true if evil is the *necessary* development of a holy cause. But more of this hereafter.





intrinsic moral distinctions fade away. We may indeed *speculate* respecting these distinctions, — we may say that justice evidently is right in itself, and injustice wrong in itself; but this judgment has *practical* efficiency only as one of the terms takes the form of the most agreeable. But we have seen that the most agreeable depends upon the state of the sensitivity in correlation with the object, — a state and a correlation antecedent to action ; and that therefore it is a necessary law of our being, to be determined by

the greatest apparent good or the most agreeable. Utility, therefore, is not only in point of fact, but also in point of necessity, the law of action. There is no other law under which it is conceivable that we can act.

VII. It follows from this system, again, that no individual can make an effort to change the habitual character of his volitions, — and of course cannot resist his passions, or introduce any intellectual or moral discipline other than that













shown, we must find a motive to change the state of mind in order to a change of the state : but this motive, if it exist, must pre-exist in the state of mind. If it pre-exist, then no change is required; if it do not, then we must seek still an antecedent motive, and so in endless retrogression. If the problem be to change both subject and object, the same difficulties exist in twofold abundance.

The grand difficulty is to find a *primum mobile*, or first mover, when the very act of seeking implies a

















exhortations are necessary sequents, as well as necessary antecedents. The water must run through the water-course; the wheel must turn under the force of the current; I must exhort and persuade when motives determine me. The minds I address must yield when the motives are properly selected.

IX. Divine commands, warnings, and rebukes, when obeyed and yielded to, are obeyed and yielded to by the necessary force which they possess in relation to the state of





the sense of the most agreeable. And as the will of the creature can have no part in producing this sense, since this would be producing a volition by a volition; and as it is produced in a correlation antecedent to will, and of course by a positive necessity; so likewise the will of the creature can have no part in preventing this sense from taking place. The volition of obedience and the volition of disobedience are manifestations of the antecedent correlations of certain objects with the

subject, and are necessarily determined by the nature of the correlation.

Now the Divine Being must know the precise relation which his commands will necessarily hold to the vast variety of mind to which they are addressed, and consequently must know in what cases obedience will be produced, and in what cases disobedience. Both results are equally necessary. The commands have therefore, necessarily and fitly, a twofold office. When they come into connexion with certain









The volitions are mine, and therefore I am guilty. This reasoning is plausible, but not consequential; for, according to this system, I put forth volitions in entire passivity: the volitions appear necessarily and by antecedent motives in my consciousness, and really are mine only because they are produced in me. Connected with this may be the perception that those volitions are wrong ; but if there is likewise the conviction that they are necessary, and that to suppose them different from what they are, is to













names, we are influenced to yield an implicit belief, — the sense of merit and demerit must either die away, or be maintained by a hasty retreat from the regions of speculation to those of common sense.

XI. It follows from this system, also, that nature and spirit, as causes or agents, cannot be distinguished in their operations.

There are three classes of natural causes or agents generally acknowledged : 1. Inanimate,— as water, wind, steam, magnetism,

&c.; 2. Animate, but insensible, — as the life and affinities of plants ; 3. Animate and sensitive, or brute animal power.

These all properly come under the denomination of *natural*, because they are alike *necessitated*.

“Whatever is comprised in the chain and mechanism of cause and effect, of course necessitated, and having its necessity in some other thing antecedent or concurrent, — this is said to be *natural*; and the aggregate and system of all such things is *nature*.”



the three first mentioned classes of natural agents enter. All the several classes have peculiar and distinguishing characteristics; but in the relation of antecedence and sequence, — their relation as causes or agents producing effects, — no distinction can be perceived. Wind, water, &c. form one kind of cause ; organic life forms another; brute organization and sensitivity another; intelligent volition another: but they are all necessary, absolutely necessary; and therefore they are the co-

ordinate parts of the one system of nature. The difference which exists between them is a difference of *terms* merely. There is no difference in the *nature* of the relation between the terms. The nature of the relation between the water-wheel and the water, — of the relation between the organic life of plants and their development,— of the relation between passion and volition in brutes, — of the relation between their efforts and material effects, — and the nature of the relation between motive



exist, as acts of volition. Sensations, emotions, perceptions, reasonings, are all within us; they all lie in our consciousness; they are not created by our volitions, like the motions of the hands and feet; they take place by their own causes, just as volitions take place by their causes. The relation of the man to all is precisely the same. He is in no sense the cause of any of these affections of his being; he is simply the subject: the subject of sensation, of perception, of emotion, of reasoning, and of volition; and he is the



subject of all by the same necessity.

XIII. The system of punishment is only a system accommodated to the opinions of society.

There is nothing evil in itself, according to this system of necessity, as we have already shown. Everything which takes place is, in its time, place, and relations generally, the necessary result of necessary and infinite wisdom. But still it is a fact that society are desirous of preventing certain acts, — such as stealing, adultery,





which we may at any time experience, we ought to endure and rejoice in, as flowing from the same perfect and necessary source. But as calamity does nevertheless necessarily produce suffering and uneasiness, and the desire of relief, we may be permitted to hope that perfect relief and entire blessedness will finally ensue, and that the final blessedness will be enhanced just in proportion to the present suffering.

The necessitarian may be an optimist of a high order.

If he commits what is called crime, and remorse succeeds, and punishment is inflicted under law, the crime is good, the remorse is good, the punishment is good, all necessary and good, and working out, as he hopes, a result of pure happiness. Nothing can be bad in itself: it may be disagreeable; but even this will probably give way to the agreeable. And so also with all afflictions : they must be good in themselves, although disagreeable, — and will probably lead the way to the agreeable, just as











position, inasmuch as his position is a necessary one, predetermined in its necessary connexion with the first necessary wisdom.

XVI. Another consequence of this system is fatalism, — or, perhaps, more properly speaking, the system is itself a system of fatalism.

This, indeed, has already been made to appear substantially. The word, however, has not yet been used. I here, then, charge directly this consequence or feature upon the system.

Fatalism is the absolute











whether he act or forbear to act, his volitions are as the most agreeable.

All creatures, therefore, acting by volition, are to be accounted free, and one really as free as another.

In the third place, the liberty here affirmed belongs equally to every instance of stated antecedence and sequence.

The liberty which is taken to reside in the connexion between volition and effects, is a liberty lying in a connexion of stated antecedence and sequence, and is perfect according as this connexion is necessary











freedom ; but in the case of the wheel and mill-stone, we have nothing of which liberty can properly be affirmed. I reply, that liberty must be affirmed, and is properly affirmed, of that to which it really belongs ; and hence as volition is supposed to belong to the spiritual essence, man; and this spiritual essence is pronounced free, because volition appears in it, and is attended by consequences : — so, likewise, the material essence of the wheel may be pronounced free,





as incomprehensible too, as that water should freeze at a given temperature: when the volition is impeded, we have only another instance of necessity, — a lesser force overcome by a greater.

The liberty therefore which this system affirms in the fact of volition and its unimpeded connexion with its consequents, is an assumption—a mere name. It is a part of the universal necessity arbitrarily distinguished and named. As liberty does not reside in human volition, so neither can it reside in the









whatever their doctrines was, if any of them held such a fate, as is repugnant to any *liberty, consisting in our doing as we please*, I utterly deny such a fate.” He objects to fatalism only when it should deny our actions to be connected with our pleasure, or our sense of the most agreeable, that is our volition. But this connexion we have fully proved to be as necessary as the connexion between the volition and its motive. This reservation therefore does not save him from fatalism.

In the following section, (sec. vii.) he represents the liberty and sovereignty of God as consisting in an ability “to do whatever pleases him.” His idea of the divine liberty, therefore, is the same as that attributed to man. That the divine volitions are necessarily determined, he repeatedly affirms, and indeed represents as the great excellence of the divine nature, because this necessity of determination is laid in the infinite wisdom and perfection of his nature.

If necessity govern all

being and events, it is cheering to know that, it is necessity under the forms of infinite wisdom and benevolence. But still it remains true that necessity governs. If “it is no disadvantage or dishonour to a being, *necessarily* to act in the most excellent and happy manner from the necessary perfection of his own nature,” still let us remember that under this representation *he does act necessarily*. Fate must have some quality or form; it must be what we call good or evil: but in determining its quality, we



benign, and glorious. Now if all things thus *proceeding* from fate were beautiful, benign, and glorious, the theory might not alarm us. But that deformity, crime, and calamity should have place as developments of this fate, excites uneasiness. The abettors of this system, however, may perhaps comfort themselves with the persuasion that deformity, crime, and calamity, are names not of realities, but of the limited conceptions of mankind. We have indeed an instance in point in Charles





***Both*** are necessary parts of one whole, which could not but exist. Shall God then be angry at the sight of the iron link? What absurdity! God esteems this link at its proper value. He sees it in its cause, and he approves this cause, for it is good. God beholds moral monsters as he beholds physical monsters. Happy is the link of gold! Still more happy if he know that he is ***only fortunate***. He has attained the highest degree of moral perfection, and is nevertheless without pride, knowing that what he is, is the necessary

result, of the place which he must occupy in the chain. The gospel is the allegorical exposition of this system ; the simile of the potter is its summary.” He might have added, “Happy is the link of iron, if he know that he is not guilty, but at worst *only unfortunate* ; and really not unfortunate, because holding a necessary place in the chain which both as a whole and in its parts, is the result of infinite wisdom.”

If anything more is required in order to establish this consequence





power, then no such power exists. The whole theory of action and causality will then be expressed as follows:

1. Absolute and necessary connexion of motives and volitions.
2. Absolute and necessary connexion of volitions and effects.
3. Absolute and necessary connexion of all sequents and antecedents in nature.
4. Absolute and necessary connexion of all things existent with a first and necessary principle or cause.
5. The necessary determination of this

principle or cause.

Denying a contingent self-determining will, this theory is all that remains. If liberty be affirmed to reside in the 2nd particular of this theory, it becomes a mere arbitrary designation, because the *nature* of the relation is granted to be the same; it is not *contingent*, but necessary. Nor can liberty be affirmed to reside in the 5th ; because in the first place, the supposed demonstration of the absurdity of a contingent self-determining will, by





fatalism. Liberty thus becomes a self-contradictory conception, and fatalism alone is truth and reality.

XVII. It appears to me also, that pantheism is a fair deduction from this system.

According to this system, God is the sole and universal doer — the only efficient cause. 1. His volition is the creative act, by which all beings and things exist. Thus far it is generally conceded that God is all in all. “By him we live, and move, and have

our being.” 2. The active powers of the whole system of nature he has constituted and regulated. The winds are his messengers. The flaming fire his servant. However we may conceive of these powers, whether as really powers acting under necessary laws, or as immediate manifestations of divine energy, in either case it is proper to attribute all their movements to God. These movements were ordained by his wisdom, and are executed directly or indirectly by his will. Every effect which we

produce in the material world, we produce by instrumentality. Our arms, hands, &c. are our first instruments. All that we do by the voluntary use of these, we attribute to ourselves. Now if we increase the instrumentality by the addition of an axe, spade, or hammer, still the effect is justly attributed in the same way. It is perfectly clear that to whatever extent we multiply the instruments, the principle is the same. Whether I do the deed directly with my hand, or do it by an



and capacity I have learned by experience, but in whose constitution I have had no hand. They are provided for me, and I merely use them. But God in working by these, works by what his own wisdom and power have created; and therefore *a fortiori* must every effect produced by these, according to his design, and by his volition as at least the first power of the series, be attributed to him, — be called his doing. He causeth the sun to rise and set. “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of

man.” “He watereth the hills from his chambers.” This is not merely poetry. It is truth.

Now the system we are considering goes one step further; it makes human volitions as much the objects of the eternal design, and as really the effects of the divine volition, as the rising of the stars, the flight of the lightning, the tumult of the waters, or the light which spreadeth itself like a garment over creation. Every volition of created mind is God’s act, as really as any effect in nature. We

have seen how every volition is connected with its motive; how the motive lies in a preconstitution; how the series of antecedents and sequents necessarily runs back and connects itself with the infinite wisdom. God's volition is his own act; the effect immediately produced by that volition is his own deed. Let that effect be the creation of man: the man in all his powers and susceptibilities is God's work; the objects around him are God's work; the correlation of the objects with the sensitivity





the only cause. All beings and things, all motion and all volition, are absolutely resolved into divine volition. God is the author of all beings, things, motions, and volitions, and as much the author of any one of these as of any other, and the author of all in the same way and in the same sense. Set aside self-determining will, and there is no stopping-place between a human volition and the divine volition. The human volition is but the divine, manifested through a lengthened it may be, but a connected and necessary



He is the soul of the world.

Spinosas never represented himself as an atheist, and according to the following representation appears rather as a pantheist. “He held that God is the **cause** of all things; but that he acts, not from choice, but from necessity ; and, of consequence, that he is the involuntary author of all the good and evil, virtue and vice, which are exhibited in human life.” (Dugald Stewart, vol. 6. p. 276, note.)

Cousin remarks, too, that Spinosas deserves rather the







simple attributes of that one and absolute substance, but attributes which are co-eternal with their substance : for as phenomena cannot exist without a subject, the imperfect without the perfect, the finite without the infinite, and man and nature suppose God; so likewise, the substance cannot exist without phenomena, the perfect without the imperfect, the infinite without the finite, and God on his part supposes man and nature. The error of his system lies in the predominance of the





conspicuously than that of cause; and this notion of substance, altogether predominating, constitutes Spinosism.” (Hist, de la Phil, tom. 1. p. 466.)

The predominance of the notion of substance and attribute, over that of cause and effect, which Cousin here pronounces the vice of Spinoza’s system, is indeed the vice of every system which contains the dogma of the necessary determination of will. The first consequence is pantheism ; the second, atheism. I will endeavour to explain. When self-











substance, — we destroy personality : we have nothing remaining but the universe. Now we may call the universe God; but with equal propriety we call God the universe. This destruction of personality, — this merging of God into necessary substance and attributes, — is all that we mean by Atheism. The conception is really the same, whether we name it fate, pantheism, or atheism.

The following remark of Dugald Stewart, shows that he arrived at the same result: “Whatever may have

been the doctrines of some of the ancient atheists about man's free agency, it will not be denied that, in the history of modern philosophy, the schemes of atheism and of necessity have been hitherto always connected together. Not that I would by any means be understood to say, that every necessitarian must *ipso facto* be an atheist, or even that any presumption is afforded, by a man's attachment to the former sect, of his having the slightest bias in favour of the latter ; but only that every modern atheist I



have heard of has been a necessitarian. I cannot help adding, that the most consistent necessitarians who have yet appeared, have been those who followed out their principles till they ended in ***Spinosism***, — a doctrine which differs from atheism more in words than in reality.” (Vol. 6, p. 470.)

Cudworth, in his great work entitled “The true Intellectual System of the Universe,” shows clearly the connexion between fatalism and atheism. This work seems to have grown out of another undertaking,



maintained, will, as we conceive, serve the design of atheism, and undermine Christianity, and all religion, as taking away all guilt and blame, punishments and rewards, and plainly rendering a day of judgment ridiculous.” This opinion of the tendency of the doctrine of a necessitated will, is the germ of his work. The connexion established in his mind between this doctrine and atheism, naturally led him to his masterly and elaborate exposition and refutation of the latter.

The arguments of many atheists might be referred to, to illustrate the connexion between necessity and atheism. I shall here refer, however, to only one individual, remarkable both for his poetic genius and metaphysical acumen. I mean the late Percy Bysshe Shelley. He openly and unblushingly professed atheism. In his *Queen Mab* we find this line : “There is no God.” In a note upon this line, he remarks: “This negation must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity. The

hypothesis of a pervading spirit, coeternal with the universe, remains unshaken.” This last hypothesis is Pantheism. Pantheism is really the negation of a creative Deity, — the identity or at least necessary and eternal co-existence of God and the universe. Shelley has expressed this clearly in another passage ;

*“Spirit of nature! all-  
sufficing power,  
Necessity! thou mother of  
the world*

In a note upon this

passage, Shelley has argued the doctrine of the necessary determination of will by motive, with an acuteness and power scarcely inferior to Collins or Edwards. He makes, indeed, a different application of the doctrine, but a perfectly legitimate one. Collins and Edwards, and the whole race of necessitarian theologians, evidently toil under insurmountable difficulties, while attempting to base religion upon this doctrine, and effect their escape only under a fog of subtleties.

But Shelley, in daring to be perfectly consistent, is perfectly clear. He fearlessly proceeds from necessity to pantheism, and thence to atheism and the destruction of all moral distinctions. "We are taught," he remarks, "by the doctrine of necessity, that there is neither good nor evil in the universe, otherwise than as the events to which we apply these epithets have relation to our own peculiar mode of being. Still less than with the hypothesis of a God, will the doctrine of necessity accord with the

belief of a future state of punishment.”

I here close my deductions from this system. If these deductions be legitimate, as I myself cannot doubt they are, then, to the largest class of readers, the doctrine of necessity is overthrown : it is overthrown by its consequences, and my argument has the force of a *reductio ad absurdum*. If a self-determined will appear an absurdity, still it cannot be as absurd as the contrary doctrine, if this doctrine involve the consequences above given.





opposing great errors as really connected with a self-determined will. What can be stronger than the following language : “I think that the notion of liberty, consisting in a *contingent self-determination of the will*, as necessary to the morality of men’s dispositions and actions, is almost inconceivably pernicious; and that the contrary truth is one of the most important truths of moral philosophy that ever was discussed, and most necessary to be known.” The question is a fair one,



determining will, or the *liberty of indifference*, as it has been technically called, is conceived to be exploded, they endeavour to supply a *liberty of spontaneity*, or a liberty lying in the unimpeded connexion between volition and sequents.

Hobbes has defined and illustrated this liberty in a clearer manner than any of its advocates: "I conceive," says he, "liberty to be rightly defined,— the absence of all impediments to action, that are not contained in the nature and intrinsical quality of the

agent. As for example, the water is said to descend *freely*, or is said to have liberty to descend by the channel of the river, because there is no impediment that way; but not *across*, because the banks are impediments: and though water cannot ascend, yet men never say, it wants the *liberty* to ascend, but *the faculty* or *power*, because the impediment is in the nature of the water, and intrinsical. So also we say, he that is tied, wants the *liberty* to go, because the impediment is not in him,

but in his hands; whereas, we say not so of him who is sick or lame, because the impediment is in himself,” — that is, he wants the faculty or power of going: — this constitutes natural *inability*. Liberty is volition acting upon physical instrumentalities, or upon mental faculties, according to a fixed and constituted law of antecedents, and meeting with no impediment or overcoming antagonistic power. Natural ability is the fixed and constituted antecedence itself. Hence there may be natural ability









nothing when employed against those who hold to the self-determining power of the will. The latter receive these common ideas, feelings, and practices of men, as facts indicative of freedom, because they raise no question against human freedom. The real question at issue is, how are we to account for these facts ? The advocates of self-determining power account for them by referring them to a self-determined will. We say a man is free when he does as he pleases or according to his volitions,











connexion between the volition and its antecedents or motives. Liberty is physical; necessity is metaphysical. The first belongs to man; the second transcends the sphere of his activity, and is not his concern. In this very difficult position, no better or more ingenious solution could be devised ; but that it is wholly illogical and ineffectual, and forms no escape from absolute and universal necessity, has already been abundantly proved.

2. The philosophers and divines of whom we



are speaking, conceive that when volitions are supposed to exist out of the necessary determination of motives, they exist fortuitously and without a cause. But to give up the necessary and universal dependence of phenomena upon causes, would be to place events beyond the divine control: nay, more, — it would destroy the great *a posteriori* argument for the existence of a God. Of course it would be the destruction of all morality and religion.

3. The doctrine of the divine foreknowledge, in





theory which they advocate is viewed only in its favourable points, and without reaching forth to its legitimate consequences. If these consequences are urged by another hand, they are sought to be evaded by concentrating attention upon the fact of volition and the sense of freedom attending it: for example, if fatalism be urged as a consequence of this theory, the ready reply is invariably—"No such necessity is maintained as goes to destroy the liberty which consists in doing as



















generally, and rebuke him for sin, when you know that he is utterly unable to move, in the slightest degree, towards any of these affections and actions, and utterly unable to leave off sinning, until the divine influence be exerted, which brings his heart into correlation with religion, and makes it possible for him to put forth the volitions of piety and duty ? It can be regarded in no other light than playing a solemn farce, thus to rebuke and urge and persuade, as if the man ought to make some











the array of religious truth and the energy of religious exhortation must fail to produce the required volitions, on account of the state of mind, so neither can the state of mind be changed by this array of truth or by this exhortation. There is a positive opposition of mind and object, and the collision becomes more severe upon every attempt to bring them together. It must follow, therefore, that preaching truth and duty to the unregenerate, so far from leading to their conversion, can only serve



producing any tendency towards regeneration. The heart being in no correlation with these,—its sense of the disagreeable,—and therefore the energy of its refusal will only be the more intense and decided.

If it should be remarked that hope and fear are feelings, which, even in a state of unregeneracy, can be operated upon, the state of things is equally difficult. No such hope can be operated upon as implies desire after religious principles and enjoyments ; for this cannot belong to the

corrupt nature ; nor can any fear be aroused which implies a reverence of the divine purity, and an abhorrence of sin. The fear could only relate to danger and suffering; and the hope, to deliverance and security, independently of moral qualities. The mere excitement of these passions might awaken attention, constrain to an outward obedience, and form a very prudent conduct, but could effect no purification of the heart. There is another class of theologians, of whom Edwards is one, who



particular connexion.

Moral inability, as we have seen, is the impossibility of a given volition, because there are no motives or causes to produce it. It is simply the impossibility of an effect for the want of a cause : when we speak of moral cause and effect, according to Edwards, we speak of nothing different from physical cause and effect, except in the quality of the terms — the relation of the terms is the same.

The impossibility of a given volition, therefore, when the appropriate motive is







system. There is no volition of preference where there is no motive to this effect; and there is no motive to this effect where the state of the mind is not in correlation with the objects presented : on the contrary, the volition which now takes place, is a volition of refusal.

Natural inability, as defined by this system, lies in the connexion between the volition considered as an antecedent, and the effect required. Thus I am naturally unable to walk, when, although I make the volition, my limbs, through









action; nay, “the very willing is the doing of it but then the volition as an effect cannot take place without a cause ; and to acknowledge a moral inability, is nothing less than to acknowledge that there is no cause to produce the required volition.

The condition of men as represented by the second class of theologians, is not really different from their condition as represented by the first class. The inability under both representations is a total inability. In the utter impossibility of a











man to put forth volitions in reference to his regeneration, may consist with a self-determining power of will, but is altogether irrelevant on this system. It is urging *him* to do what *he* cannot do; and indeed what all persuasion must fail to do *in him* as a mere passive subject. To assure him that the affair is quite easy, because nothing is required of him but to will, is equivalent to assuring him that the affair is quite easy, because it will be done when he has done it. The man may reply, the affair





alike in an inevitable and ever-enduring chain.

It is plainly impossible to escape from this conclusion, and yet maintain the philosophy. All efforts of this kind, made by appealing to the common sentiments of mankind, we have seen are self-contradictory. It will not do to press forward the philosophy until involved in difficulty and perplexity, and then to step aside and borrow arguments from another system which is assumed to be overthrown. There is no necessity more absolute and sovereign,













its effect; and in this case we do not say the ***strongest*** cause produces the effect, because there is no comparison. So also there are cases in which there is but one moral cause or motive present, when there being no comparison, we cannot affirm that the volition is determined by the ***strongest*** motive: the doing of something may be entirely agreeable, and the not doing of it may be utterly disagreeable: in this case the motive is only for the doing of it. But wherever the case contains

a comparison of causes or of motives, it must be true that the effect which actually takes place, is produced by the strongest cause or motive. This indeed is nothing more than a truism, or a mere postulate, as if we should say, — let a cause or motive producing effects be called the strongest. It may be represented, also, as a *petitio principii*, or reasoning in a circle, — since the proof that the will is determined by the strongest motive is no other than the fact that it is determined. It may be









will we are about to take up.

2. *The strongest motive is always the most agreeable.*

Edwards maintains that the motive which always prevails to cause volition, has this characteristic,—that it is the most agreeable or pleasant at the time, and that volition itself is nothing but the sense of the most agreeable. If there should be but one motive present to the mind, as in that case there would be no comparison, we presume he would only say that the will is determined by *the agreeable*.





what suits them best, or what is most *agreeable to them*. To say that they do what *pleases* them, but yet what is not *agreeable* to them, is the same thing as to say, they do what they please, but do not act their pleasure; and that is to say, that they do what they please, and yet do not what they please.” (p. 25.)

Motives differ widely, intrinsically considered. Some are in accordance with reason and conscience; some are opposed to reason and conscience. Some are wise; some are foolish. Some are

good; some are bad. But whatever may be their intrinsic properties, they all have this characteristic of agreeableness when they cause volition; and it is by this characteristic that their strength is measured. The appeal, however, which is made to sustain this, is made in a way to beg the very point in question. Will not everyone admit, that “when men act *voluntarily and do what they please*, they do what suits them best, and what is most agreeable to them ?” Yes. Is it not a palpable contradiction, to



object which moves the *desire* must of course appear *desirable*, or agreeable, or pleasant ; for they have the same meaning. If men always will what they most desire, and desire what they will, then of course when they act voluntarily, they do what they please; and when they do what they please, they do what suits them best and is most agreeable to them.

Edwards runs the changes of these words with great plausibility, and we must say deceives himself as well as others.



The great point, — whether will and desire are one, — whether the volition is as the most agreeable, — he takes up at the beginning as an unquestionable fact, and adheres to throughout as such; but he never once attempts an analysis of consciousness in relation to it, adequate and satisfactory. His psychology is an assumption.

3. The will is necessarily determined.

How does Edwards prove this? 1. On the general connexion of causes and effects. Causes necessarily

produce effects, unless resisted and overcome by opposing forces ; but where several causes are acting in opposition, the strongest will necessarily prevail, and produce its appropriate effects.

Now, Edwards affirms that the nature of the connexion between motives and volitions is the same with that of any other causes and effects. The difference is merely in the terms : and when he calls the necessity which characterizes the connexion of motive and volition “a moral



volition by a method of approximation, (p. 33.) He here grants, for the sake of the argument, that the will may oppose the strongest motive in a given case; but then he contends that it is supposable that the strength of the motive may be increased beyond the strength of the will to resist, and that at this point, on the general law of causation, the determination of the will must be considered necessary. “Whatever power,” he remarks, “men may be supposed to have to surmount difficulties, yet











### **3: AN EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST A SELF- DETERMINING AND CONTINGENT WILL.**

EDWARDS'S first and great argument against a self-determining will, is given in part II. sec, 1, of his work, and is as follows :

The will,— or the soul, or man, by the faculty of willing, effects everything within its power as a cause, by acts of choice. “The will determines which way the hands and feet shall move, by an act of choice ; and







must cause them by volitions. The causative act by which the soul causes volitions, must itself be a volition. This assumption Edwards does not even attempt to sustain, but takes for granted that it is of unquestionable validity. If the assumption be of unquestionable validity, then his position is impregnable; for nothing can be more palpably absurd than the will determining volitions by volitions, in an interminable series.

Before directly meeting the assumption, I remark,

that if it be valid, it is fatal to all causality. Will is simply cause; volition is effect. I affirm that the will is the sole and adequate cause of volition. Edwards replies: if will is the cause of volition, then, to cause it, it must put forth a causative act; but the only act of will is volition itself: hence if it cause its own volitions, it must cause them by volitions.

Now take any other cause: there must be some effect which according to the general views of men stands directly connected with it as its effect. The



before it; and so on, *ad infinitum*. We have here then an infinite series of causative acts — an absurdity of the same kind, with an infinite series of volitions.

It follows from this, that there can be no cause whatever. An infinite series of causative acts, without any first, being, according to this reasoning, the consequence of supposing a cause to cause its own acts, it must therefore follow, that a cause does not cause its own acts, but that they must be caused by some cause out of the



cause. But the cause out of the cause which causes the causative acts in question, must cause these causative acts in the other cause by a causative act of its own: — but the same difficulties occur in relation to the second cause as in relation to the first; it cannot cause its own acts, and they must therefore be caused out of itself by some other cause ; and so on, *ad infinitum*. We have here again the absurdity of an infinite series of causative acts; and also, the absurdity of an infinite series of causes without a first cause.





determine its own act, or cause its own act, then it must do this by a previous act, according to the principle of this reasoning ; and this again by another previous act; and so on, *ad infinitum*.

Take any other cause, and the reasoning must be the same.

It may be said in reply to the above, that volition is an effect altogether peculiar. It implies selection or determination in one direction rather than in another, and therefore that in inquiring after its cause, we inquire not

merely after the energy which makes it existent, but also after the cause of its particular determination in one direction rather than in another. “The question is not so much, how a spirit endowed with activity comes to *act*, as why it exerts *such* an act, and not another ; or why it acts with a particular determination ? If activity of nature be the cause why a spirit (the soul of man, for instance) acts and does not lie still; yet that alone is not the cause why its action is thus and thus limited,









correlation with certain objects, and consequently exhibits phenomena only with respect to them. In chemistry, under the title of affinities, we have wonderful exhibitions of selection and particular determination. Now motive, according to Edwards, lies in the correlation of the nature of the will, or desire, with certain objects; and volition is the effect of this correlation. The selection made by will, arising from its nature, is, on the principle of Edwards, like the selection made by any



self-determining will, against the consequences above deduced from them. The distinction of final and efficient causes does not lie in his system. The motive is that which produces the sense of the most agreeable, and produces it necessarily, and often in opposition to reason and conscience; and this sense of the most agreeable is choice or volition. It belongs to the opposite system to make this distinction in all its clearness and force — where the efficient will is distinguished, both from







The first position is admitted. The second, involving the last, he does not prove, and I deny that it is unquestionable.

In the first place, it cannot legitimately be taken as following from the first. The relation of will to the sequents of its volitions, is not necessarily the same as its relation to its volitions. The sequents of volitions are changes or modifications, in external nature, or in parts of the being external to the will; but the volitions are modifications of the will itself. Now if the

modification of external nature by the will can be effected only by that modification of itself called volition, how does it appear that this modification of itself, if effected by itself, must be effected by a previous modification of itself? We learn from experience, that volitions have sequents in external nature, or in parts of our being external to will; but this experience teaches us nothing respecting the production of volitions. The acts of the will are volitions, and all the acts of wills are volitions ; but this









Edwards does not escape the very difficulty which he creates; for I have already shown, that the same difficulty appertains to motive, and to every possible cause. Every cause produces effects by exertion or acting; but what is the cause of its acting ? To suppose it the cause of its own acts, involves all the absurdities which Edwards attributes to self-determination. But,

*In the second place,* — let us look at the connexion of cause and phenomena a little more particularly. What is cause ? It is that













Sometimes the *nisus* or volition expends itself in the will, and gives no external phenomena. I may make an effort to raise my arm, but my arm may be bound or paralyzed, and consequently the effort is in vain, and is not known without. How energetic are the efforts made by the will during a fit of the nightmare! we struggle to resist some dreadful force; we strive to run away from danger — but all in vain.

It is possible for me to make an effort to remove a mountain: I may place my hand against its side, and

tug, and strive : the ***nisus*** or volition is the most energetic that I can make, but, save the straining of my muscles, no external expression of the energy of my will is given ; I am resisted by a greater power than myself.

The most original movement of every cause is, then, this ***nisus*** in the bosom of the cause itself, and in man, as a cause, the most original movement is this ***nisus*** likewise, which in him we call volition. To deny such a ***nisus*** would be to deny the activity, efficiency, and energy of



and is, indeed, the annihilation of all cause.

The assumption of Edwards, therefore, that if will determine its own volitions, it must determine them by an act of volition, is unsupported alike by the facts of consciousness and a sound logic,— while all the absurdities of an infinite series of causation of acts really fasten upon his own theory, and destroy it by the very weapons with which it assails the opposite system.

*In the third place, —* Edwards virtually allows

the self-determining power of will.

Will he defines as the desire, the affections, or the sensibility. There is no personal activity out of the affections or sensitivity. Volition is as the most agreeable, and is itself the sense of the most agreeable. But what is the cause of volition? He affirms that it cannot be will, assuming that to make will the cause of its own volitions, involves the absurdity of willing volitions or choosing choices; but at the same time he affirms the cause to

be the state of the affections or will, in correlation with the nature and circumstances of objects. But all natural causes are in correlation with certain objects, — as, for example, heat is in correlation with combustibles; that is, these natural causes act only under the condition of meeting with objects so constituted as to be susceptible of being acted upon by them. So, likewise, according to Edwards's representation, we may say that the cause of volition is the nature and state of the

affections or the will, acting under the condition of objects correlated to it. The sense of the most agreeable or choice cannot indeed be awakened, unless there be an object presented which shall appear the most agreeable ; but then its appearing most agreeable, and its awakening the sense of the most agreeable, depends not only upon “what appears *in* the object viewed, but also in the *manner* of the view, and *the state and circumstances* of the mind that views.” (p. 22.) Now “the *state* and



*circumstances* of the mind that views, and the *manner* of its view,” is simply the mind acting from its inherent nature and under its proper conditions, and is a representation which answers to every natural cause with which we are acquainted : the state of the mind, therefore, implying of course its inherent nature, may with as much propriety be taken as the cause of volition, on Edwards’s own principles, as the nature and state of heat may be taken as the cause of combustion: but

















But if we can distinguish in the consciousness, the will as a personal activity, from the sensitivity,—if we can distinguish volition from the strongest desire or the sense of the most agreeable, — then it will not follow, because the one is necessary, the other is necessary likewise, unless a necessary connexion between the two be also an observed fact of consciousness. This will be inquired into in another part of our undertaking. What we are now mainly concerned with, is Edwards's argument

against the conception of a will not necessarily determined. This he calls a contingent determination of will. We adopt the word contingent; it is important in marking a distinction.

Edwards, in his argument against a contingent determination, mistakes and begs the question under discussion.

1. He mistakes the question. Contingency is treated of throughout as if identical with chance or no cause. "Anything is said to be contingent, or to come to pass by chance or accident, in the original

meaning of such words, when its connexion with its causes or antecedents, according to the established course of things, is not discerned ; and so is what we have no means of foreseeing. And especially is anything said to be contingent or accidental, with regard to us, when it comes to pass without our foreknowledge, and beside our design and scope. But the word ***contingent*** is used abundantly in a very different sense ; not for that whose connexion with the series of things we

cannot discern so as to foresee the event, but for something which has absolutely no previous ground or reason with which its existence has any fixed and certain connexion.” (p. 31.)

Thus, according to Edwards, not only is ***contingent*** used in the same sense as chance and accident, in the ordinary and familiar acceptation of these words, but it is also gravely employed to represent certain phenomena, as without any ground, or reason, or cause of their existence; and it is

under this last point of view that he opposes it as applied to the determination of the will. In part 2, sec. 3, he elaborately discusses the question — “whether any event whatsoever, and volition in particular, can come to pass without a cause of its existence and in sec. 4, — “whether volition can arise without a cause, through the activity of the nature of the soul.”

If, in calling volitions contingent, — if, in representing the determination of the will as contingent, we intended to



unquestionably one of those primitive truths which neither require nor admit of a demonstration, because they precede all demonstration, and must be assumed as the basis of all demonstration.

By a contingent will, I do not mean a will which is not a cause. By contingent volitions, I do not mean volitions which exist without a cause. By a contingent will, I mean a will which is not a necessitated will, but what I conceive only and truly to be a *free will*. By contingent volitions, I





with chance, or no cause, is a fair argument; but then it must be remembered that such an argument really goes to prove that nothing but necessity is possible, — for we mean by contingency that which is opposed to necessity.

The argument must therefore turn upon these two points: First, is contingency a possible conception, or is it in itself contradictory and absurd ? This is the main question ; for if it be decided that contingency is a contradictory and absurd conception, then we are

shut up to a universal and an absolute necessity, and no place remains for inquiry respecting a contingent will. But if it be decided to be a possible and rational conception, then the ***second*** point will be, to determine whether the will be contingent or necessary.

The first point is the only one which I shall discuss in this place. The second properly belongs to the psychological investigations which are to follow. But I proceed to remark, 2. that Edwards, in his argument against a



mistaking of it; for when we are inquiring whether there be any thing contingent, that is, anything opposed to necessity, he ***begins*** his argument by affirming all cause to be necessary, and contingency as implying no cause. If all cause be necessary, and contingency imply no cause, there is no occasion for inquiry after contingency; for it is already settled that there can be no contingency. The very points we are after, as we have seen, are these two: whether contingency be possible ; and whether







***necessary.***

The second does not take will into consideration at all, and applies to subjects where opposition of will is not supposable; for example, logical necessity, a is b, and c is a, therefore c is b: mathematical necessity,  $2 \times 2 = 4$ . The centre of a circle is a point equally distant from every point in the circumference: metaphysical necessity, the existence of a first cause, of time, of space. Edwards comprehends this second kind of necessity under the general designation of metaphysical or













*cannot possibly not be, or be otherwise than it is.*

1. An event necessary by a relative particular necessity, is an event which is and cannot possibly not be or be otherwise by the opposition of an individual will.

2. An event necessary by a relative general necessity, is an event which cannot possibly not be, or be otherwise by the opposition of all finite will. In these cases, opposition of will of course is supposable.

3. An event is necessary by a metaphysical particular necessity, when















which exists independently of will, and that which exists purely as the effect of will, we call the first necessary ; the second, contingent. The first we cannot conceive to be different from what it is. The second we can conceive to be different from what it is. What is true of the creation considered as a collection of beings and things, is true likewise of all the events taking place in this creation. All these events are either directly or mediately the effects of will, divine or human. Now



Edwards be true ; for according to this, there really is no possibility that any event of will might have had no being at all, or might have been different from what it is. Will is determined by motives antecedent to itself. And this applies to the divine will, likewise, which is determined by an infinite and necessary wisdom. The conception, therefore, of the possibility of that which is, being different from what it is, must on this system be chimerical. But although the system would force us to this conclusion,

the conception still reigns in our minds, and does not *seem* to us chimerical; — the deduction from the system strangely conflicts with our natural and spontaneous judgments. There are few men who would not be startled by the dogma that all things and all events, even the constantly occurring volitions of their minds, are absolutely necessary, as necessary as a metaphysical axiom or a mathematical truth, — necessary with a necessity which leaves no possibility of their being otherwise





utterly futile this attempted distinction is — how completely the metaphysical necessity embraces the so called natural liberty and ability. If nothing better than this can be resorted to, then we have no alternative left but to exclaim with Shelley, “Necessity, thou mother of the world!” But why the reluctance to escape from this universal necessity ? Do the abettors of this system admit that there is something opposed to necessity? But what is this something opposed to necessity ? Do they affirm

that choice is opposed to necessity? But how opposed — is choice contingent? Do they admit the possibility that any choice which is, might not have been at all, or might have been different from what it is?

We surely do not distinguish choice from necessity by merely calling it choice, or an act of the will. If will is not necessitated, we wish to know under what condition it exists. Volition is plainly under necessity on Edwards's system, just as every other event is under





be a mere illusion.

There is an idea opposed to necessity, says this spontaneous judgment — and the will comes under the idea opposed to necessity. But what is this idea opposed to necessity, and how does the will come under it? Edwards and his followers have not answered these questions — their attempt at a solution is self-contradictory and void.

Is there any other idea opposed to necessity than that of contingency, viz. — that which is or may be, and possibly might not be,

or might be otherwise than it is ? That  $2 \times 2 = 4$  is a truth which cannot possibly not be, or be otherwise than it is. But this book which I hold in my hand, I can conceive of as not being at all, or being different from what it is, without implying any contradiction, according to this spontaneous judgment.

The distinction between right and wrong, I cannot conceive of as not existing, or as being altered so as to transpose the terms, making that right which now is wrong, and that





contradiction, and under a false position, as the abettors of the scheme which I am opposing for example, or in the ordinary conduct of life, they act upon it. All the institutions of society, all government and law, all our feelings of remorse and compunction, all praise and blame, and all language itself, seem based upon it. The idea of contingency as above explained, is somehow connected with will, and all the creations and changes arising from *will*.

That the will actually does come under this idea of

contingency, must be shown psychologically if shown at all. An investigation to this effect must be reserved therefore for another occasion. In this place, I shall simply inquire, how the will may be conceived as coming under the idea of contingency?

The contingency of any phenomenon or event must depend upon the nature of its cause. A contingent phenomenon or event is one which may be conceived of, as one that might not have been at all, or might have been



















Then consequently in the second place, all causes ordained by the divine will, considered as effects, are contingent. They might not have been. They might cease to be. They might be different from what they are. But in the third place, these causes considered as causes, are not all contingent. Only will is contingent. Physical causes are necessary with a determined necessity. They are necessary as fixed by the divine will. They are necessary with a relative necessity — relatively to the divine will. They put forth







all this clamour against contingency ? Do you say it represents phenomena as existing without cause? We deny it. We oppose contingency not to cause, but to necessity. Do you say it is contrary to the phenomena of physical causation, — we reply that you have no right to reason from physical causes to that cause which is yourself. For in general you have no right to reason from the laws and properties of matter to those of mind. Do you affirm that contingency is an absurd and pernicious





pages, it perhaps is unnecessary to make any further reply to its alleged absurdity.

There is one form under which this allegation comes up, however, which is at first sight so plausible, that I shall be pardoned for prolonging this discussion in order to dispose of it. It is as follows: That in assigning contingency to will, we do not account for a volition being in one direction rather than in another. The will, it is urged, under the idea of contingency, is indifferent to any particular volition.







universal necessity,  
therefore, we must  
conceive of a will forming  
volitions particular and  
determinate, or in other  
words, making a *nisus*  
towards particular objects,  
without any correlation of  
its nature with the objects.  
Is this conception a  
possible and rational  
conception ? It is not a  
possible conception if will  
and the sensitivity, or the  
affections are identical —  
for the very definition of  
will then becomes that of a  
power in correlation with  
objects, and necessarily  
affected by them.

But now let us conceive of the will as simply and purely an activity or cause, and distinct from the sensitivity or affections — a cause capable of producing changes or phenomena in relation to a great variety of objects, and conscious that it is thus capable, but conscious also that it is not drawn by any necessary affinity to any one of them. Is this a possible and rational conception ? It is indeed the conception of a cause different from all other causes; and on this conception there are but two *kinds* of causes. The







fixed, determined, and necessitated. The will is a cause contingent and free. A physical cause is a cause instrumental of a first cause : — the will is first cause itself. The infinite will is the first cause inhabiting eternity, filling immensity, and unlimited in its energy. The human will is first cause appearing in time, confined to place, and finite in its energy ; but it is the same in kind, because made in the likeness of the infinite will ; as first cause it is self-moved, it makes its *nisus* of itself, and of itself it







scheme of psychology in order to prove the possibility of a contingent will, that we have nothing else to oppose to an absolute and universal necessity.

According to this scheme, we take the will as the *executive* of the soul or the *doer*. It is a doer having life and power in itself, not necessarily determined in any of its acts, but a power to do or not to do. *Reason* we take as the *lawgiver*. It is the “source and substance” of pure, immutable, eternal, and necessary truth. This



itself. By the personality, I mean the me, or myself. The personality — the me — the will, a self-moving cause, directs itself by an act of attention to the reason, and receives the laws of its action. The perception of these laws is attended with the conviction of their rectitude and imperative obligation; at the same time, there is the consciousness of power to obey or to disobey them.

Again, let the will be supposed to direct itself in an act of attention to the pleasurable emotions

connected with the presence of certain objects; and the painful emotions connected with the presence of other objects ; and then the desire of pleasure, and the wish to avoid pain, become rules of action. There is here again the consciousness of power to resist or to comply with the solicitations of desire. The will may direct itself to those objects which yield pleasure, or may reject them, and direct itself towards those objects which yield only pain and disgust.

We may suppose again























passion; we must either represent the will as necessitated, and take all the consequences of a necessitated will, or we must stop short here likewise, with the will itself as a first cause, not necessary, but contingent, which, in explaining its own volitions, neither requires nor admits of any explanation itself, other than as a finite and dependent will it requires to be referred to the infinite will in order to account for the fact of its existence.

Edwards, while he





will, it always puts on the characteristic of the most agreeable. The question therefore returns, how this simple capacity determines such a variety of volitions, always however representing them to itself as the most agreeable? There are three ways of answering this. *First*, we may suppose the *state* of the will or sensitivity to remain unchanged, and the different volitions to be effected by the different arrangements and conditions of the objects relatively to it. *Secondly*, we may suppose the

arrangements and conditions of the objects to remain unchanged, and the different volitions to be effected by changes in the ***state*** of the sensitivity, or will, relatively to the objects. Or, ***thirdly***, we may suppose both the state of the will, and the arrangements and conditions of the objects to be subject to changes, singly and mutually, and thus giving rise to the different volitions. But our questionings are not yet at an end. On the first supposition, the question comes up, how the







nature and circumstances of the object. But when the correlation is such as to give the volition in the direction of the right and the rational, in opposition to the wrong and the foolish, — we ask *why* does the correlation give the volition in this direction. If it be said that the volition in this direction appears most agreeable, the answer is a mere repetition of the question; for the question amounts simply to this: — why the correlation is such as to make the one agreeable rather than the

other ? The volition which is itself only the sense of the most agreeable, cannot be explained by affirming that it is always as the most agreeable. The point to be explained is, why the mind changes its state in relation to the objects ; or why the objects change their relations to the mind, so as to produce this sense of the most agreeable in one direction rather than in another ? The difficulty is precisely of the same nature which is supposed to exist in the case of a contingent will. The will *now* goes in the direction



















understand, the gratification of desire, as opposed to reason. To obey reason because it is reasonable, is nothing more than the statement of the fact that the will does obey reason. To obey desire because it is desirable, is nothing more than the statement of the fact that the will does obey desire. The will goes in one direction rather than in another by an act of self-determination, which neither admits of, nor indeed requires any other explanation than this, that the will has power to do

one or the other, and in the exercise of this power, it does one rather than the other.

To this stands contrasted the system of Edwards ; and what is this system ? That the will is determined by the strongest motive; — and what is the strongest motive ? The greatest apparent good, or the most agreeable : — what constitutes the greatest apparent good, or the most agreeable ? The correlation of will or sensitivity and the object. But why does the correlation make one object appear more

agreeable than another; or make the same object at one time appear agreeable, at another time disagreeable ? Now this question is equivalent to the question,—why does the will go in the direction of one object rather than of another ; or go in the direction of a given object at one time, and in opposition to it at another time ? For the will to determine itself toward an object in one system, answers to the will having the sense of the most agreeable towards an object in Edwards's system.

If Edwards should attempt to give an answer without going beyond the motive, he could only say that the sensitivity has the power of being affected with the sense of the most agreeable or of the most disagreeable; and that in the exercise of this power it is affected with the one rather than with the other. He could not say that to obey reason appears more agreeable than to obey passion as opposed to reason, for the obedience of the will on his system, is nothing more than a sense of the most agreeable. Nor













**se**; it goes in that direction because it has power to go in that direction.

There are in the intelligence or reason, as united with the will in the constitution of the mind, necessary convictions of the true, the just, the right. There are in the sensitivity, as united in the same constitution, necessary affections of the agreeable and the disagreeable in reference to various objects. The will as the power which by its *nisus* produces changes or phenomena, is conscious of ability to go in either of













and neither asking nor allowing of any explanation of its acts, or their particular direction, save its own peculiarity and energy as will.

The question respecting the indifferency of will must now be considered. The term *indifferency* comes up in consequence of considering the will as distinct from the sensitivity. It is not desire or feeling—it is a power indifferent to the agreeableness or disagreeableness of objects.

It is also a power distinct from the reason ; it is not



his will is really creative or modifying, according to its self-directed aim. In man it is constituted, dependent, limited, and accountable.

Now in direct connexion with power, we have the conception of law or rule, or what power *ought* to do. This law or rule is revealed in the reason. In man as pure, and we conclude in God likewise, as the archetype of all spirit, there is given a sensitivity or a capacity to be affected agreeably by, and to be drawn towards the objects approved and commanded by the reason.

If this sensitivity does not move in harmony with the reason, it is corrupted. Now will is placed in a triunity with these two other powers. We can distinguish but not separate it from them. A will without reason would be a power without eyes, or light. A will without sensitivity would be a power stern and isolated;—just as a reason and sensitivity without will, would be without efficiency, or capacity of giving real manifestations.

The completeness and perfection of each, lies in a



manifestations.

The reason does not govern the sensitivity, and yet the latter would have no definite perception, and of course its highest sensibilities would lie dormant without the reason.

So also the reason and the sensitivity do not determine the acts of the will. The will has efficiency, or creative and modifying power in itself — self-moved, self-directed. But then without reason and sensitivity, the will would be without objects, without designs, without rules, — a













selected; — there is no command of the reason directing to one square rather than another; — there is no affection of the sensitivity towards one square rather than another, as most agreeable — and yet the will does select one of the squares.

It will be proper, in this place, to consider the following argument of Edwards against indifferency of will: “Choice may be immediately *after* a state of indifference, but cannot co-exist with it: even the very beginning of it is not

in a state of indifference. And, therefore, if this be liberty, no act of the will, in any degree, is ever performed in a state of liberty, or in the time of liberty. Volition and liberty are so far from agreeing together, and being essential one to another, that they are contrary one to another, and one excludes and destroys the other, as much as motion and rest, light and darkness, or life and death." (p. 73.)

Edwards reasons according to his own psychology: If the will and















conjoined. In the unity of our being, however, we perceive that will is designed to obey the reason, and as subordinated to reason, to move within the delights of the sensitivity; and we know that we are acting *unreasonably* and *senselessly* when we act otherwise; but yet *unreasonably* and *senselessly* do we often act. But when we do obey reason, although we characterize the act from its direction, will does not lose its simplicity and become reason; and when













God to permit such a train of contingent events to take place, as his own foreknowledge shall not extend to? Does not such a proposition detract from the omnipotence of God, in the same proportion in which it aims to exalt his omniscience?" If the divine foreknowledge goes to establish the doctrine of necessity, there is nothing left that it is worthwhile to contend for; all moral and theological interests vanish away. But let us examine the argument of Edwards.

This argument consists of three parts ; we shall



infallibly foreknown by God, have an indissoluble connexion with his foreknowledge, and are therefore necessary.

The force of this reasoning turns upon the connexion between foreknowledge and the events foreknown. This connexion is affirmed to be “indissoluble;” that is, the foreknowledge is certainly connected with the event. But this only amounts to the certainty of divine foreknowledge, and proves nothing as to the nature of the existence foreknown. We may certainly know a





by the faculty of memory I see a man walking in the time called yesterday. The knowledge, whether it relate to past, present, or future, as a knowledge in relation to myself, is always a present knowledge ; but the object known may stand in various relations of time, place, &c. Now in relation to the future, no more than in relation to the past and present, does the act of knowledge on my part, explain anything in relation to the mode of the existence of the object of knowledge. Edwards remarks, (p. 121.) “All



certain knowledge, whether it be foreknowledge, or after-knowledge, or concomitant knowledge, proves the thing known now to be necessary, by some means or other; or proves that it is impossible that it should now be otherwise than true.”

Edwards does not distinguish between the certainty of the mere *fact* of existence, and the necessity by which anything comes to exist. Foreknowledge, after-knowledge, and concomitant knowledge, — that is, the present knowledge of events,

future, past, or present, — proves of course the reality of the events; that they will be, have been, or are: or, more strictly speaking, the knowledge of an event, in any relation of time, is the affirmation of its existence in that relation; but the knowledge of the event neither proves nor affirms the necessity of its existence. If the knowledge of the event were the **cause** of the event, or if it **generically** comprehended it in its own existence, then, upon strict logical principles, the necessity affirmed of the



volitions, does not take away from these wills the contingency and freedom belonging to them, any more than our witnessing how wills act in the time present, takes away from them their contingency and freedom. God in his prescience, *is the spectator of the future, as really as we are the spectators of the present.*

Edwards's reasoning is a sort of puzzle, like that employed sometimes for exercising the student of logic in the detection of fallacies: for example, a

man in a given place, must *necessarily* either stay in that place, or go away from that place; therefore, whether he stays or goes away, he acts necessarily. Now it is necessary, in the nature of things, that a man as well as any other body should be in some place, but then it does not follow from this, that his determination, whether to stay or go, is a necessary determination. His necessary condition as a body, is entirely distinct from the question respecting the necessity or contingency of his

volitions. And so also in respect of the divine foreknowledge: all human volitions as events occurring in time, are subject to the necessary condition of being foreknown by that Being, “who inhabiteth eternity but this necessary condition of their existence neither proves nor disproves the necessity or the contingency of their particular causation.

II. The second proposition in Edwards’s argument is, “No future event can be certainly

foreknown, whose existence is contingent, and without all necessity.” His reasoning in support of this is as follows: 1. “It is impossible for a thing to be certainly known to any intellect without *evidence*”

2. A contingent future event is without evidence.

3. Therefore, a contingent future event is not a possible object of knowledge. I dispute both premises : That which is known by *evidence* or *proof* is *mediate* knowledge, — that is, we know it through something

which is immediate, standing between the faculty of knowledge and the object of knowledge in question. That which is known *intuitively* is known without proof, and this is *immediate* knowledge. In this way all axioms or first truths and all facts of the senses are known.

Indeed evidence itself implies immediate knowledge, for the evidence by which anything is known is itself immediate knowledge. To a Being, therefore, whose knowledge fills duration,



future and past events may be as immediately known as present events. Indeed, can we conceive of God otherwise than immediately knowing all things? An Infinite and Eternal Intelligence cannot be thought of under relations of time and space, or as arriving at knowledge through *media* of proof or demonstration. So much for the first premise. The second is equally untenable: “A *contingent future event is without evidence*” We grant with Edwards that it is not *self-evident*, implying by that

the evidence arising from “the necessity of its nature,” as for example,  $2 \times 2 = 4$ . What is self-evident, as we have already shown, does not require any evidence or proof, but is known immediately; and a future contingent event may be self-evident as a fact lying before the divine mind, reaching into futurity, although it cannot be self-evident from “the necessity of its nature.” But Edwards affirms, that “neither is there any ***proof*** or evidence in ***anything else***, or evidence of connexion with something

else that is evident; for this is also contrary to the supposition. It is supposed that there is now nothing existent with which the future existence of the *contingent* event is connected. For such a connexion destroys its contingency and supposes necessity.” (p. 116.) He illustrates his meaning by the following example : “Suppose that five thousand seven hundred and sixty years ago, there was no other being but the Divine Being,— and then this world, or some particular body or spirit, all

at once starts out of nothing into being, and takes on itself a particular nature and form—all in *absolute contingency*,—without any concern of God, or any other cause in the matter, — without any manner of ground or reason of its existence, — or any dependence upon, or connexion at all with anything foregoing;— I say that if this be supposed, there was no evidence of that event beforehand. There was no evidence of it to be seen in the thing itself; for the thing itself as yet was not; and there was

no evidence of it to be seen in *anything else*; for *evidence* in something else; is *connexion* with something else; but such connexion is contrary to the supposition.” (p. 116.)

The amount of this reasoning is this: That inasmuch as a contingent event exists “*without any concern of God, or any other cause in the matter, — without any manner of ground or reason of its existence, — or any dependence upon or connexion with anything foregoing,*” — *there is really nothing by which it can be*





*different from foreseeing his own volitions.*

The ground on which human volitions can be foreseen, is no less plain and reasonable. In the first place, future contingent volitions are never without a cause and sufficient ground of their existence, the individual will being always taken as the cause and sufficient ground of the individual volitions. God has therefore provided for the possible existence of volitions other than his own, in the creation and constitution of finite free will. Now, in relation to



him, it is not required to conceive of *media* by which all the particular volitions may be made known or proved to his mind, previous to their actual existence. Whatever he knows, he knows by direct and infinite intuition; he cannot be dependent upon any *media* for his knowledge. It is enough, as I have already shown, to assign him prescience, in order to bring within his positive knowledge all future contingent volitions. He knows all the variety and the full extent of the



or calculation can foresee the motions of the planets, eclipses of the sun and moon, and even the flight of the comets, because they are governed by necessary laws ; but the volitions of the human will form the subject of only *probable* calculations.

But if human volitions, as contingent, form the subject of probable calculations, there must be in opposition to Edwards something “that is evident” and “now existent, with which the future existence of the *contingent* event is connected.”

There are three kinds of certainty. ***First***, absolute certainty. This is the certainty which lies in necessary and eternal principles : e. g.  $2 \times 2 = 4$ ; the existence of space; everybody must be in space; every phenomenon must have a cause ; the being of God.

Logical certainty, that is, the connexion between premises and conclusion, is likewise absolute.

***Secondly***. Physical certainty. This is the certainty which lies in the connexion between physical causes and their

phenomena: e. g.  
gravitation, heat, chemical  
affinities in general,  
mechanical forces.

The reason conceives of  
these causes as inherently  
active and uniform; and  
hence, wherever a physical  
cause exists, we expect its  
proper phenomena.

Now we do not call the  
operation of these causes  
***absolutely*** certain,  
because they depend  
ultimately upon will, — the  
will of God; and we can  
conceive that the same will  
which ordained them, can  
change, suspend, or even  
annihilate them: they have



and under a necessity relatively to the divine will; but still not ***absolutely*** certain, because there is a possibility of a miracle. But when we affirm anything to be absolutely certain, we mean that it is certain as comprehended in a principle which is unalterable in its very nature, and is therefore independent of will.

***Thirdly.*** Moral certainty, is the certainty which lies between the connexion of motive and will. By will we mean a self-conscious and intelligent cause, or a cause in unity

with intelligence. It is also, in the fullest sense, a cause *per se* ; that is, it contains within itself proper efficiency, and determines its own direction. By *motives* we mean the reasons according to which the will acts. In general, all activity proceeds according to rules, or laws, or reasons; for they have the same meaning : but in mere material masses, the rule is not contemplated by the acting force, — it is contemplated only by the intelligence which ordained and conditioned the force. In spirit, on the contrary,



the activity which we call will is self-conscious, and is connected with a perception of the reasons, or ends, or motives of action. These motives or ends of action are of two kinds. **First**, those found in the ideas of the practical reason, which decides what is fit and right. These are reasons of supreme authority. **Secondly**, those found in the understanding and sensitivity: e. g. the immediately useful and expedient, and the gratification of passion. These are right only when subordinate to the first.

Now these reasons and motives are a light to the will, and serve to direct its activities; and the human conscience, which is but the reason, has drawn up for the will explicit rules, suited to all circumstances and relations, which are called *ethics*, or *the rules*.

These rules the will is not compelled or necessitated to obey. In every volition it is conscious of a power to do or not to do ; but yet, as the will forms a unity with the intelligence, we take for granted that it will obey them, unless grounds for an opposite conclusion are



necessitated, for then his infinite meritoriousness would cease. Moral certainty is ***not absolute***, because will being a power to do or not to do, there is always a possibility, although there may be no probability, nay an infinite improbability, that the will may disobey the laws of the reason.

In the case of angels and good men, the moral certainty is such as to be attended with no apprehension of a dereliction. With respect to such men as Joseph, Daniel, Paul, Howard, and

Washington, we can calculate with a very high and satisfactory moral certainty, of the manner in which they will act in any given circumstances involving the influence of motives. We know they will obey truth, justice, and mercy, — that is, the *first* class of motives; and the *second* only so far as they are authorized by the first. If the first class of motives are forsaken, then human conduct can be calculated only according to the influence of the second class.

Human character,



***resultant*** of the opposite moral forces which we are likely to find.

We have remarked that moral certainty exists only where the harmony of the moral constitution is preserved. Here we know the right will be obeyed. It may be remarked in addition to this, however, that moral certainty may almost be said to exist in the case of the lowest moral degradation, where the right is altogether forsaken. Here the rule is, “whatever is most agreeable and the volition is indeed merged into the sense of the most







description, although possible, we may conclude are very rare. In calculating, then, future acts of will, we may, like the mathematicians, drop infinitesimal differences, and assume that all acts of the will are in the direction of reason or sensitivity, or of both in their harmony. Although the will is conscious of power to do, out of the direction of both reason and sensitivity, still, in the triunity in which it exists, it submits itself to the general interests of the being, and consults the authority of conscience, or



the conscience from day to day, and in a great variety of transactions ; and hence we conclude that he has formed for himself a fixed purpose of doing wrong. He has exhibited, too, on many occasions, low, selfish, and impure feelings; and hence we conclude that his sensitivity is in collision with conscience.

In both cases supposed, and in like manner in all supposable cases, there is plainly a basis on which, in any given circumstances, we may foresee and predict volitions. There is















derived from infinite wisdom.

The human will may likewise be uniform by obeying the laws of conscience, but the departures may also be indefinitely numerous and various.

To sum up these observations in general statements, we remark;—

**First:** The connexion on which we base predictions of human volitions, is the connexion of will with reason and sensitivity in the unity of the mind or spirit.

**Secondly:** By this

connexion, the will is seen to be designed to be regulated by truth and righteousness, and by feeling subordinated to these.

**Thirdly:** In the purity of the soul, the will is thus regulated.

**Fourthly:** This regulation, however, does not take place by the necessary governance which reason and sensitivity have over will, but by a self-subjection of will to their rules and inducements; — this constitutes meritoriousness, — the

opposite conduct constitutes ill desert.

**Fifthly:** Our calculations must proceed according to the degree and fixedness of this self-subjection to reason and right feeling; or where this does not exist, according to the degree and fixedness of the habits of wrong doing, in a self-subjection to certain passions in opposition to reason.

**Sixthly:** Our calculations will be more or less certain according to the extent and accuracy of our observations upon human conduct.

**Seventhly:** Our calculations can never be attended with *absolute* certainty, because the will being contingent, has the power of disappointing calculations made upon the longest observed uniformity.

**Eighthly:** Our expectations respecting the determinations of Deity are attended with the highest moral certainty. We say *moral* certainty, because it is certainty not arising from necessity, and in that sense absolute; but certainty arising from the free choice of an infinitely

pure being. Thus, when God is affirmed to be immutable, and when it is affirmed to be impossible for him to lie, it cannot be meant that he has not the power to change or to determine contrary to truth; but that there is an infinite moral certainty arising from the perfection of his nature, that he never will depart from infinite wisdom and rectitude.

To assign God any other immutability would be to deprive him of freedom.

**Ninthly:** The divine foresight of human volitions need not be

supposed to necessitate them, any more than human foresight, inasmuch as foreseeing them, has no necessary connexion in any case with their causation. Again, if it does not appear essential to the divine foresight of volitions that they should be necessary. We have seen that future contingent volitions may be calculated with a high degree of certainty even by men; and now supposing that the divine being must proceed in the same way to calculate them through *media*,—the reach and accuracy of his calculations



must be in the proportion of his intelligence, and how far short of a certain and perfect knowledge of all future contingent volitions can infinite intelligence be supposed to fall by such calculations ?

**Tenthly:** But we may not suppose that the infinite mind is compelled to resort to deduction, or to employ *media* for arriving at any particular knowledge. In the attribute of prescience, he is really present to all the possible and actual of the future.

III. The third and last



that it may possibly not be, is to suppose his knowledge inconsistent with itself; or that one thing he knows is utterly inconsistent with another thing he knows.” (page 117.)

The substance of this reasoning is this. That inasmuch as a contingent future event is *uncertain* from its very nature and definition, it cannot be called an object of *certain* knowledge, to any mind, not even to the divine mind, without a manifest contradiction. “It is the same as to say, he now



no law of necessity, and at the moment of causation, is conscious of ability to withhold the causative *nisus*. Now all volitions which have already come to exist in this way, have both a certain and contingent existence. It is certain that they have come to exist, for that is a matter of observation ; but their existence is also contingent, because they came to exist, not by necessity as a mathematical conclusion, but by a cause contingent and free, and which, although actually giving



sensitivity — hence they may do so in the future. They have done this according to a uniformity self-imposed, and long and habitually observed — hence this uniformity may be continued in the future.

A future contingent event may therefore have a high degree of probability, and even a moral certainty.

But to a being endowed with prescience, what prevents a positive and infallible knowledge of a future contingent event? His mind extends to the actual in the future, as easily as to the actual in the





there can be no doubt but that the event foreseen will come to pass; but then it is foreseen as an event coming to pass contingently, and not necessarily.

The error we have just noted, appears again in the corollary which Edwards immediately deduces from his third position. “From what has been observed,” he remarks, “it is evident, that the absolute *decrees* of God are no more inconsistent with human liberty, on account of the necessity of the event which follows such decrees,

than the absolute *foreknowledge* of God.”

(page 118.) The absolute decrees of God are the determinations of his will, and comprehend the events to which they relate, as the cause comprehends the effect. Foreknowledge, on the contrary, has no causality in relation to events foreknown. It is not a determination of divine will, but a form of the divine intelligence. Hence the decrees of God do actually and truly necessitate events; while the foreknowledge of God extends to events which are



















repetition, and by placing the same things in new positions, that we often best attain perspicuity, and succeed in rendering philosophical ideas familiar.

First: Let us consider minutely the distinction between certainty and necessity. Necessity relates to truths and events considered in themselves. Certainty relates to our apprehension or conviction of them. Hence necessity is not certainty itself, but a ground of certainty. *Absolute certainty* relates only to truths or to

being.

First or intuitive truths, and logical conclusions drawn from them, are necessary with an absolute necessity. They do not admit of negative suppositions, and are irrespective of will. The being of God, and time, and space, are necessary with an absolute necessity.

***Relative necessity*** relates to logical conclusions and events or phenomena. Logical conclusions are always necessary relatively to the premises, but cannot be absolutely necessary unless



relatively to will. The divine will, which gave birth to creation, is infinite; when therefore the ***nisus*** of this will was made, creation was the necessary result. The Deity is under no necessity of willing; but when he does will, the effect is said necessarily to follow — meaning by this, that the ***nisus*** of the divine will is essential power, and that there is no other power that can prevent its taking effect.

Created will is under no necessity of willing; but when it does will or make its ***nisus***, effects







based upon an *absolute necessity*, may be called an absolute certainty.

The established connexion between causes and effects, is another ground of certainty. Causes are of two kinds ; first causes, or causes *per se*, or contingent and free causes, or will; and second or physical causes, which are necessary with a relative necessity.

First causes are of two degrees, the infinite and the finite.

Now we are certain, that whatever God wills, will take place. This may





it is possible for God so to alter the constitution of my being, that my will shall have no more connexion with my hands than it now has with the circulation of the blood. I believe also that if I throw this paper into the fire, it will burn; but it is possible for God so to alter the constitution of this paper or of fire, that the paper will not burn; and yet I have a certain belief that my hand will continue to obey volition, and that paper will burn in the fire. This certainly is not an *absolute certainty*, but a

***conditional*** certainty: events will thus continue to take place on condition the divine will does not change the condition of things. This conditional certainty is likewise called a ***physical*** certainty, because the events contemplated include besides the phenomena of consciousness, which are not so commonly noticed, the events or phenomena of the physical world, or nature.

But we must next look at will itself in relation to its volitions: Here all is contingency and

freedom,—here is no necessity. Is there any ground of certain knowledge respecting future volitions ?

If will as a cause *per se*, were isolated and in no relation whatever, there could not be any ground of any knowledge whatever, respecting future volitions. But will is not thus isolated. On the contrary, it forms a unity with the sensitivity and the reason. Reason reveals *what ought to be done*, on the basis of necessary and unchangeable truth. The sensitivity reveals what is

most desirable or pleasurable, on the ground of personal experience. Now although it is granted that will can act without deriving a reason or inducement of action from the reason and the sensitivity, still the instances in which it does so act, are so rare and trifling, that they may be thrown out of the account. We may therefore safely assume as a general law, that the will determines according to reasons and inducements drawn from the reason and the sensitivity. This law is not





commanded by reason, whatever appears attractive to the pure sensitivity, will be obeyed and followed.

But what kind of certainty is this ? It is not absolute certainty, because it is supposable that the will which obeys may not obey, for it has power not to obey. Nor is it *physical* certainty, for it does not relate to a physical cause, nor to the connexion between volition and its effects, but to the connexion between will and its volitions. Nor again can we, strictly speaking, call it a *conditional*



their unity with the will; and as the commands of reason in relation to conduct have received the name of **moral** [Lat. *moralis*, from *mos*,— i. e. custom or ordinary conduct.] laws, simply because they have this relation,— and as the sensitivity, when harmonizing with the reason, is thence called morally pure, because attracting to the same conduct which the reason commands, — this certainty may fitly be called **moral certainty**. The name, however, does not

mark *degree*. Does this certainty possess degrees ? It does. With respect to the volitions of God, we have the highest degree of moral certainty, — an infinite moral certainty. He, indeed, in his infinite will, has the power of producing any volitions whatever; but from his infinite excellency, consisting in the harmony of infinite reason with the divine affections of infinite benevolence, truth, and justice, we are certain that his volitions will always be right, good, and wise. Besides, he has assured us of his fixed determination



and freedom, not with the power of making an opposite determination, but in absolute necessity. But if it be affirmed that God's will, will ***certainly*** go in the direction of truth, righteousness, and love, the affirmation respects our ***knowledge*** and ***conviction*** of the character of the divine volitions in the whole eternity of his being. We may indeed proceed to inquire after the grounds of this knowledge and conviction; and if the necessity of the divine determinations be the

ground of this knowledge and conviction, it must be allowed that it is a sufficient ground. But will any man assume that necessity is the *only* ground of certain knowledge and conviction ? If necessity be universal, embracing all beings and events, then of course there is no place for this question, inasmuch as any other ground of knowledge than necessity is not supposable. But if, at least for the sake of the argument, it be granted that there may be other grounds of knowledge than









the creature, exercising gratitude towards God and confiding in him, holds no other relation to him than the sunflower to the sun — by a necessity of its nature, ever turning its face upwards to receive the influences which minister to its life and properties.

The moral certainty attending the volitions of created perfect beings is the same in kind with that attending the volitions of the Deity. It is a certainty based upon the relative state of the reason and the sensitivity, and their unity with the will. Wherever the

reason and the sensitivity are in harmony, there is moral certainty. I mean by this, that in calculating the character of future volitions in this case, we have not to calculate the relative energy of opposing principles:— all which is now existent is, in the constituted unity of the soul, naturally connected only with good volitions. But the *degree* of the moral certainty in created beings, when compared with that attending the volitions of Deity, is only in the proportion of the finite to the infinite. The





sensitivity, to any degree, to grow into opposition to the reason, so that while the reason commands in one direction, the sensitivity gives the sense of the most agreeable in the opposite direction,— and then our calculations respecting future volitions must vary accordingly. Here moral certainty exists no longer, because volitions are now to be calculated in connexion with opposing principles: calculations now attain only to the probable, and in different degrees.

By *the probable*, we

mean that which has not attained to certainty, but which nevertheless has grounds on which it claims to be believed. We call it *probable* or *proveable*, because it both has proof and is still under conditions of proof, that is, admits of still farther proof. That which is *certain*, has all the proof of which the case admits. A mathematical proposition is certain on the ground of necessity, and admits of no higher proof than that which really demonstrates its truth.

The divine volitions are



certain on the ground of the divine perfections, and admit of no higher proof than what is found in the divine perfections.

The volitions of a good created being are certain on the ground of the purity of such a being, and admit of no higher proof than what is found in this purity.

But when we come to a mixed being, that is, a being of reason, and of a sensitivity corrupted totally or in different degrees, then we have place not for certainty, but for probability. As our knowledge of the future



















— but with respect to the will, *it is not true* that uniformity appears to be a characteristic of necessary cause, because the will is not a necessary cause. That uniformity therefore, as in the case of physical causes, seems to become a characteristic of necessary cause, does not arise from the nature of the idea of cause, but from the nature of the particular subject, viz., *physical* cause. Uniformity in logical strictness, does not belong to cause at all, but to law or rule. Cause is simply efficiency or power : law or





pleasing to the sensitivity;  
and every individual,  
whatever may be the  
degree of his corruption,  
forms for himself certain  
rules of conduct, and as the  
very idea of *rule* embraces  
uniformity, we expect in  
every individual more or  
less uniformity of conduct.  
Uniformity of physical  
causation, is nothing but  
the design of the supreme  
reason developed in  
phenomena of nature.  
Uniformity of volitions is  
nothing but the design of  
reason and pure sensitivity,  
or of corrupted passion  
developed in human





assumption incapable of being supported that freedom is identified with disorder.

*Of the words,  
Foreknowledge and  
Prescience.*

These words are metaphorical: *fore* and *pre* do not qualify *knowledge* and *science* in relation to the mind which has the knowledge or science; but the time in which the knowledge takes place in relation to the time in which the object of knowledge is found. The



metaphor consists in giving the attribute of the time of knowledge, considered relatively to the time of the object of knowledge, to the act of knowledge itself. Banishing metaphor for the sake of attaining greater perspicuity, let us say,

**First:** All acts of knowing are present acts of knowing,—there is no *fore* knowledge and no *after* knowledge.

**Secondly:** The objects of knowledge may be in no relation to time and space whatever, e. g. pure abstract and necessary truth, as  $2 \times 2 = 4$ ; and the



relations of time and space, under certain limitations, is the faculty as given in man. We know objects in time present, and past, and future; and we know objects both near and distant; but then our knowledge does not extend to all events in any of these relations, or in any of these relations to their utmost limit.

The faculty of knowledge as knowing objects in all relations of time and space, under no limitations, is the faculty under its divine and infinite form. Under this form it comprehends the



We have shown before that the perfection of the knowledge does not settle the mode of causation : that which comes to pass by necessity, and that which comes to pass contingently, are alike known to God.

## CONCLUSION.

I here finish my review of Edwards's System, and his arguments against the opposite system. I hope I have not thought or written in vain. The review I have aimed to conduct fairly and

honourably, and in  
supreme reverence of  
truth. As to style, I have  
laboured only for  
perspicuity, and where a  
homely expression has best  
answered this end, I have  
not hesitated to adopt it.  
The nice graces of rhetoric,  
as popularly understood,  
cannot be attended to in  
severe reasoning. To amble  
on a flowery surface with  
fancy, when we are mining  
in the depths of reason, is  
manifestly impossible.

The great man with  
whose work I have been  
engaged, I honour and  
admire for his intellectual

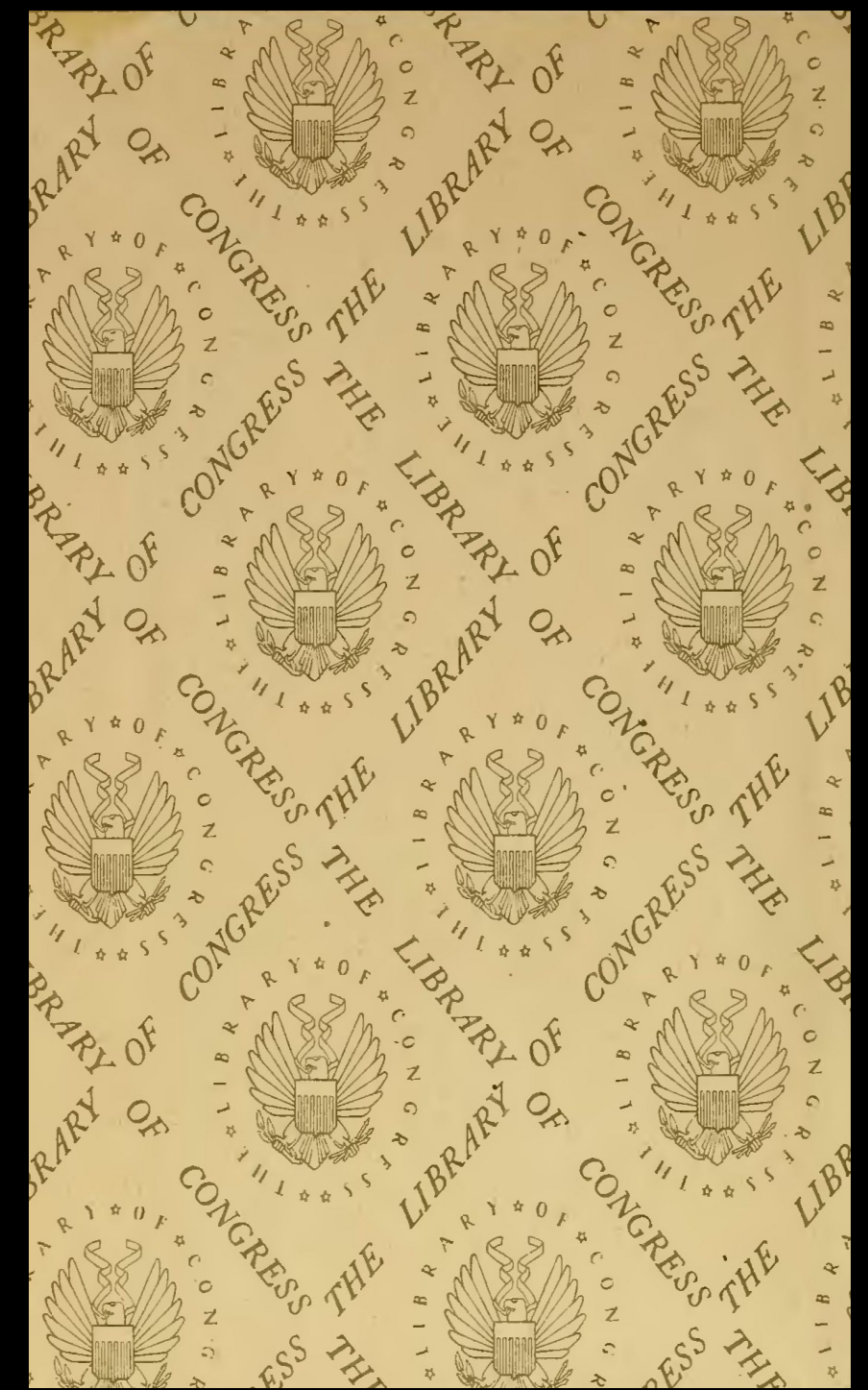


the academian grove, I view him in a different character, and here his voice does not sound to me so sweet as Plato's.

The first part of my undertaking is accomplished. When I again trouble the public with my lucubrations, I shall appear not as a reviewer, but in an original work, which in its turn must become the subject of philosophical criticism.

**THE END.**





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